Final Performance Evaluation: Youth Pathways to Leadership, Learning and Livelihoods in Costa Rica

# United States Department of Labor

## Bureau of International Labor Affairs

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Authors: Michele González Arroyo

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CCITUL | Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Limón (*Cámara de Comercio, Industria y Turismo de Limón*) |
| CEMCA | Caribbean Women's Business Chamber (Cámara Empresarial de Mujeres del Caribe) |
| CLC | Child Labor Committee |
| CMEP | Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| CUNLIMON | University College of Limón |
| DBMS | Direct Beneficiary Monitoring System |
| DERT | Disposition of Evaluation Recommendation Tracker |
| DOL | U.S. Department of Labor |
| DNE | National Employment Directorate (*Dirección Nacional de Empleo*) |
| FENTRAGH | National Federation of Agroindustry Workers and Related Industries (*Federación Nacional de Trabajadores Agroindustria y Afines*) |
| GAN | Global Apprenticeship Network |
| GOCR | Government of Costa Rica |
| ILAB | Bureau of International Labor Affairs, USDOL |
| ILO | International Labor Organization |
| IMAS | Mixed Institute of Social Assistance (*Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social*) |
| INA | National Institute of Learning (*Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje*) |
| INEC | National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*) |
| JAPDEVA | The Board of Port Administration and Economic Development of the Atlantic Coast (*Junta de Administración Portuaria y Desarrollo Económico en la Vertiente Atlántica*) |
| MEP | Ministry of Public Education (*Ministerio de Educación Pública*) |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MSI | Management Systems International |
| MTO | Medium-term Outcome |
| MTSS | Ministry of Labor and Social Security (*Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguro Social*) |
| NES | National Employment System |
| NiNi | Youth not in employment or education (*Ni estudia, ni trabaja)* |
| OATIA | Office of Response to and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Workers (*Oficina de Atención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil y Protección del Trabajador Adolescente*) |
| OCFT | ILAB's Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking |
| OTC | Long-term Outcome |
| OTP | Output |

| | |
|---|---|
| PMP | Performance Monitoring Plan |
| PRONAE | National Employment Program (*Programa Nacional de Empleo*) |
| RF | Results Framework |
| SNE | National Employment System (*Sistema Nacional de Empleo*) |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| TPR | Technical Progress Reports |
| UCCAEP | Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Association of the Private Sector (*Unión Costarricense de Cámaras y Asociaciones del Sector Empresarial Privado*) |
| USDOL | United States Department of Labor |
| WBT | Workplace-based Training |
| YBI | YouthBuild International |
| YPCR | Youth Pathways Costa Rica |

# Executive Summary

## Background

In September 2016, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) awarded YouthBuild International (YBI) and local implementing partner Paniamor Foundation (PF) a four-year $3,000,000 Cooperative Agreement grant to implement the Youth Pathways to Leadership, Learning and Livelihoods project in Costa Rica (YPCR). The YPCR project aimed to improve the country capacity to implement quality workplace-based training (WBT) alternatives for vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market. The project implemented a demonstrative initiative in Limón as a pilot in achieving WBT opportunities for at-risk youth aged 15 to 21. On September 14, 2020, USDOL approved a funded extension to address emerging issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. This extended the period of performance by eight months, revising the project end date to May 30, 2021 and increasing the budget by $250,000 to sustain the successful completion of enhanced objectives and to expand the project's response to COVID-19. This final performance evaluation of YPCR, conducted in November 2020, assesses the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project; documents lessons learned; and provides recommendations both for the six months remaining in the project and for future projects.

The YPCR project aims to improve the country capacity to implement quality workplace-based training (WBT) alternatives for vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market by 1) promoting the improvement of laws and policies supporting WBT; 2) engaging employer and worker organizations to implement WBT; and 3) facilitating the improvement of public and private programs that aim to increase vulnerable youth access to WBT. The demonstration experience of this project served as a model for implementing the support and active participation of the three types of actors needed to create quality WBT programs: vulnerable youth and their respective families, the private sector, and public institutions with related mandates.

## Evaluation Approach

The final evaluation aims to assess the project design, project effectiveness, and sustainability, and to document good practices and lessons learned. The data collection methodology was qualitative and participatory. The COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement for social distancing required the evaluator to collect the qualitative information by conducting all interviews and focus groups remotely. Quantitative data were obtained from available monitoring and evaluation (M&E) records and project reports. Quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated for many of the evaluation questions, but the ability to strengthen the credibility and validity of the results through triangulation was hindered by the fact that no field site visits or observations could be made.

The evaluator conducted interviews with a range of project stakeholders. In total, 62 stakeholders participated in remote interviews, either individually or in small groups. These included project staff, adolescent beneficiaries participating in skills training and WBT activities, parents of beneficiaries, local and national government representatives, business associations and WBT business hosts, and international organizations.

## Main Findings and Conclusions

The findings address the nine evaluation questions approved in the Terms of Reference. This report organizes them by evaluation area: project design, effectiveness and sustainability.

### Project Design

- **Validity of Project Design**: Throughout the four-year implementation period, the YPCR project strategies generally adhered to the strategies outlined in the project's Results Framework with the notable exception of collaborating with the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) and the National Institute of Learning (INA) to integrate quality WBT into their existing training programs.

- **Relevance of Project Design:** The YPCR project design directly addressed the needs of marginalized youth excluded from the labor market. Youth in vulnerable conditions need to gain access to quality employment training programs and relevant workplace experience; employers and unions need to have access to a young workforce with sufficient technical and "soft" skills to succeed in the workplace; and local and national governments need to ensure state-funded education and training programs are inclusive of youth in vulnerable conditions.

### Effectiveness

- **Project Achievement of Targets and Outcomes:** As of October 2020, the YPCR project had achieved or surpassed 19 of the 26 indicator targets (73%). The project reported achievement of all indicator targets related to Outcome 1—*development of laws and policies supporting WBT*. The project met or surpassed 9 of the 12 indicator targets contributing to OTC 2—*stakeholder use of WBT good practices*. The project had met or surpassed 5 of the 9, or 56% of the indicator targets that contribute to OTC 3—*improved quality of existing public and private programs that provide skills training to youth in vulnerable conditions*. Regarding the effectiveness of public policy strategies under OTC 1, the public policy strategy at the local level—the approval and adoption of the quality WBT model by a local municipality— reflects successful public policy advocacy. The policy goal and action plan were clearly defined and executed, and these actions resulted in the adoption of quality WBT. At the national level, the studies commissioned by the project contributed to the knowledge base that may have led to policy modifications or amendments. However, these actions did not constitute a strategic approach to public policy engagement or advocacy with a defined agenda and action plan supporting WBT.

- **Factors Contributing to Achievement of Project Outcomes**: The YPCR project successfully identified and created the conditions necessary for implementing the quality WBT model in Limón. The project's inclusion of a multidisciplinary technical team was key to providing the support for youth in vulnerable conditions. The alliances with key public and private institutions led to successful social co-responsibility in addressing the employment training needs of vulnerable youth. The local demonstration experience produced concrete results that demonstrated the effectiveness of the quality WBT model based on a local experience.

- **Factors Inhibiting Achievement of Project Outcomes:** The completion of the YPCR Blueprint and "toolkit" will facilitate the methodological replication of the quality WBT model; however, end-of-project activities were cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting activities to strengthen project outcomes. It is unlikely these activities will be completed during the 8-month extension that ends in May 2021 because of the ongoing activity restrictions due to the pandemic. Consequently, the project has pivoted its focus to implement emergency measures to address food security and psycho-social

issues of YPCR youth graduates. Furthermore, key stakeholders including government, employer and worker sectors are now focused on the immediate economic and employment crises facing Costa Rica during the pandemic.

- **Response to COVID-19**: The COVID-19 pandemic, which started six months before the project's original end date, led to historically high unemployment rates in Costa Rica, affecting the well-being of YPCR youth participants and their families. The project appropriately pivoted on activities and redirected funds to address the urgent needs resulting from the health crisis. All project products originally proposed were formally completed by September 30, 2020, and completion of the Roadmap is likely during the 8-month costed-extension phase which runs from October 2020 through May 2021. At the same time, with little assurance that the project will complete activities that will strengthen project outcomes, there is a risk of losing traction on progress made at the national and local levels toward the goal of strengthening country capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives for vulnerable youth.

- **Results of Project Midterm Evaluation**: In response to the results of the midterm evaluation recommendations made in April 2019, the project actions implemented were largely aligned with the agreed-upon actions in USDOL's Disposition of Evaluation Recommendation Tracker (DERT) for YPCR. However, Recommendation No. 4 was only partially fulfilled because without a cooperative agreement between YPCR and the national INA office, the recommended alliances with local INA officials were infeasible.

- **Unintended Results**: Various unintended, but encouraging results were identified. These included the positive impact of providing psycho-social support; the transformation of business sector attitudes toward vulnerable youth; and the YPCR Graduate Youth Network that demonstrated their leadership through peer-to-peer support, community service and advocacy efforts supporting the quality WBT model. These unintended results support the notion that the demonstration experience implemented in Limón far exceeded stakeholder expectations and showcased the potential for the quality WBT model to transform the lives of youth in vulnerable conditions.

- **Performance Monitoring**: The YPCR performance monitoring system kept project staff apprised of progress toward the stated objectives. However, its use may not have reached its full potential for making informed decisions regarding adjustments needed to strengthen project outcomes. The YPCR direct beneficiary monitoring sub-system served as a dynamic and practical system regularly used to follow the progress of young participants and to enable timely action to correct irregularities or attend to concerns.

## Sustainability

- **Sustainable Initiatives:** The YPCR Model Blueprint will facilitate the methodological transfer of the quality WBT model into public and private sector employment training programs, but the ongoing commitment of public and private sector stakeholders will be required for scaling-up of the model. The YPCR project succeeded in promoting shared responsibility among public- and private-sector stakeholders to participate in addressing the employment and training needs of marginalized youth.

- **Strengthening Sustainability**: By holding regular discussions with local municipal officials to involve them with the initial development of project strategies and throughout the demonstration experience, the project could have facilitated the transfer of the WBT model at the municipal level and augmented the model's perceived value by other municipalities as a desirable component of municipal

employment training programs. That greater perceived value is likely to have been sustained and would have promoted the transferability of the WBT model to additional municipalities.

## Lessons Learned and Promising Practices

The following list of lessons learned and promising practices are related specifically to the evaluation areas: project design, project effectiveness and sustainability.

**Lessons Learned**

- **Role of municipal governments**: The project design should include a specific strategy for increasing the role of municipal governments in the initial stages and throughout implementing the demonstration experience. This will increase understanding by municipalities of the model's feasibility and benefits and will facilitate and accelerate model implementation and integration into municipal employment training programs.

- **Key government alliances:** Establishing alliances with governmental institutions at the local level is often impossible without first cooperatively agreeing with national level officials. With the INA office in Limón, local representatives expressed an interest in participating in the YPCR demonstration experience; however, this proved infeasible because a cooperative agreement had not been established between YPCR and the national INA office. The decision to not follow up with INA officials during the current administration resulted in a missed opportunity to collaborate with a key institution and effectively strengthen the country's capacity to implement quality WBT programs inclusive of vulnerable youth. However, the availability of local results provides important information to promote the establishment of future cooperative agreements since discussions with national officials are often more effective once the results from a local experience are available.

- **Technical assistance during the transfer process**: The development of the YPCR Model Blueprint and related Toolkit will facilitate the methodological transfer of the quality WBT model to public and private institutions or programs; however, the transfer process could be strengthened if it came with technical assistance from project staff during the initial rollout period. The project did not have opportunity to accompany a transfer process during the project timeline, mostly due to the impact of the pandemic.

- **Public policy advocacy**: Effective advocacy strategies to influence public policy are based on a structured approach that identifies the problem or issue, defines the policy goal and executes an action plan. Absent a defined framework, efforts to affect policy change or action may cause the execution of activities with little impact on promoting the project outcome.

**Promising Practices**

- **Social co-responsibility**: The successful implementation of the quality WBT model is based on shared responsibility between public and private sector partners to prepare vulnerable youth for the job market. When the "whole community" is part of the learning environment, the collaborative approach provides marginalized youth with a community of mentors, which helps stimulate their interest in life-long learning.

- **Multidisciplinary project team**: The incorporation of a project team with training in psychology and social work provided holistic and integrated support for the young participants, enabling the

consideration of social factors that could support or impede successful outcomes for each young participant.

- **YPCR Youth Graduate Network**: Youth who have completed the WBT model can help raise awareness about the employment training opportunities for other youth in vulnerable conditions. Their role as advocates for the replication of the quality WBT model personalizes the results of the project and its potential impact on other youth in vulnerable conditions.

- **Training in "soft skills"**: Soft skills training that emphasizes commitment, initiative, teamwork, customer service, enthusiasm, self-control, and communication are a core part of preparing youth for a successful workplace-based training experience and a key component contributing to the success of the WBT model.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to YouthBuild International, Paniamor Foundation and USDOL to strengthen the outcomes of the YPCR project, or to improve future programming of child labor projects with similar goals.

**Immediate Recommendations for YouthBuild and Paniamor:**

1. **Follow through with MEP and INA to discuss new opportunities for collaboration**: YPCR should meet with members of the Dual Education Advisory Committee (*Comisión Asesor y Promotora de la Educación Dual*) to explore options for promoting the quality WBT model as an effective alternative for youth in vulnerable conditions. This is the opportune moment to position the quality WBT model as operational support for the Dual Education Law mandate to provide services to vulnerable populations, including youth who may be outside of the formal education system (Law 9728, Article 12).

2. **Strengthen the transfer process**: YPCR should strengthen the transfer process of the quality WBT model to municipal employment training programs. The end-of-year activities cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic should be reinstated to the degree possible during the current costed extension period. To strengthen the transfer procedure to municipal employment training programs, YouthBuild International (YBI) and Paniamor Foundation (PF) should submit a request to USDOL for an additional cost extension with sufficient time to provide follow-up to municipalities expressing interest in implementing the WBT model. The provision of technical assistance will promote the appropriate use of the YPCR Model Blueprint and ensure that the conditions necessary for implementing the quality WBT model are in place, as this is one of the fundamental steps in ensuring the success of the WBT model.

**General Recommendations for YBI and Paniamor to Strengthen Project Outcomes:**

3. **Start the transfer process at the beginning of the demonstration experience:** YPCR should engage local governments in the transfer process early in the project timeline. The early start in collaboration with municipalities on the transfer process should include the development of a cost analysis to demonstrate the feasibility of integrating the quality WBT model within local government budgets. It should also include the ongoing provision of technical assistance in model implementation by project staff. This would create a gradual learning process by municipalities that would foment their greater participation and commitment.

4. **Strengthen public policy strategies at the national and local levels:** YPCR should develop a strategic public policy plan to address the employment, education and training needs of youth in vulnerable conditions, and their psycho-social needs. The project advisory committee of local government, business, worker, and civil society organizations should engage in discussion and dialogue to identify strategies and should lobby for developing policies supporting the scaling-up of quality WBT initiatives and their inclusion in Dual Education.

5. **Form a multidisciplinary project team to execute the quality WBT model**: As the model is scaled up, YBI and PF should continue to recommend the inclusion of staff trained in psychology and social work to address psycho-social factors that could support or impede successful outcomes for each young participant.

6. **Allocate resources to childcare services**: YBI and Paniamor should allocate funds to childcare services to facilitate and enable the participation of young mothers in the quality WBT program, as young mothers are among the most likely to be neither working nor studying with few opportunities to break this cycle.

**Recommendation for USDOL to strengthen the long-term sustainability:**

7. **Provide continued support for specific award modification activities**: USDOL should extend the YPCR project by at least one year with additional funding to enable the proper transfer and implementation of the quality WBT model in other municipal youth employment training programs. Considering the progress lost during the final six months of the project and the potential impact of strengthening the transfer process of the quality WBT model to municipal employment training programs, USDOL, YBI and PF should begin discussions regarding an additional Award Modification.

# Introduction

In September 2016, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) awarded YouthBuild International (YBI) and local implementing partner Paniamor Foundation (PF) a four-year $3,000,000 Cooperative Agreement grant to implement the Youth Pathways to Leadership, Learning and Livelihoods project in Costa Rica (YPCR). The YPCR project aimed to improve the country capacity to implement quality workplace-based training (WBT) alternatives for vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market. The project implemented a demonstrative initiative in Limón as a pilot in achieving WBT opportunities for at-risk youth aged 15 to 21. On September 14, 2020, USDOL approved a funded extension to address emerging issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. This extended the period of performance by 8 months, revising the project end date to May 30, 2021 and increasing the budget by $250,000 to sustain the successful completion of enhanced objectives and to expand the project's response to COVID-19. This final performance evaluation of YPCR, conducted in November 2020, assesses the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the project; documents lessons learned; and provides recommendations both for the six months remaining in the project and for future projects.

# Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

The evaluation describes the factors driving project results and assesses whether the project interventions and activities achieved project objectives. The evaluation also documents lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations that can inform future similar projects and policies in Costa Rica and in similar environments elsewhere.

## Evaluation Questions

The final evaluation questions focus on four areas: (1) project design and validity, (2) effectiveness, (3) sustainability, and (4) good practices and lessons learned.

**Project Design and Validity**

1. To what extent was the project's theory of change valid and coherent given the implementing environment?
    a) Were the project strategies relevant to the specific needs of project participants, communities, and other stakeholders?

**Effectiveness**

2. To what extent has the project achieved its primary objectives and planned outcomes at the time of the evaluation and is the project likely to achieve them by the end of the project? Specifically,
    a) To what extent have the activities in Limón contributed to the public policies and programs that the project is promoting at the national/regional level? How?

3. To what extent were the recommendations from the midterm evaluation implemented and what were the results?

4. Did the project cause unintended results on its target communities and participants? If so, what were they?

5. How have the monitoring and evaluation systems (CMEP, pre-situational analysis, etc.) been implemented and are they being used to identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies, and make informed decisions?
    a) How effective is the project's monitoring of direct beneficiaries (youth in Limón)?

6. What were the key internal or external factors that limited or facilitated the achievement of project outcomes? Specifically:

    a) To what extent was the YPCR project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?
    b) How did the YPCR project pivot strategies due to the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the results?

**Sustainability**

7. Which project activities/initiatives are most likely sustainable and transferable to key stakeholders (at the community, municipal, provincial and national levels) before the project ends? What factors contributed to this sustainability?

8. How could the project have improved its sustainability efforts?

**Good Practices and Lessons Learned**

9. What are promising practices and lessons learned that could benefit similar projects or future programming in Costa Rica?

# Methodology

## Approach

This evaluation was highly participatory and used a mixed-methods approach using primarily qualitative data supplemented with existing project documents and quantitative data. The COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement for social distancing required the evaluator to collect the qualitative information by conducting all interviews and focus groups remotely. Quantitative data were obtained from available M&E records and project reports. Quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated for many of the evaluation questions, but the ability to strengthen the credibility and validity of the results through triangulation was hindered by the fact that no field site visits or observations could be made.

The evaluator conducted online interviews with direct project beneficiaries (youth ages 15 to 21), parents of beneficiaries, and stakeholders representing tripartite sectors in Costa Rica (government, employer and worker organizations), and with international organizations. The evaluator followed a semi-structured interview protocol for both individual and group interviews, with adjustments made for each person's background knowledge and level of involvement in project activities.

## Evaluation Schedule

Before the initiation of the interviews, the evaluator reviewed project documents, developed data collection instruments (see the section on Data Collection, below), and coordinated the scheduling of fieldwork interviews. The interviews were conducted from November 9-19, 2020. The evaluator presented preliminary findings to project staff in a remote meeting held on November 20 and conducted a debriefing discussion with representatives from USDOL on December 10.

## Data Collection

USDOL developed the evaluation questions with input from project staff and the evaluator. These questions served as the basis for the guides and protocols used during key informant interviews and document reviews (see Master Interview Guide in Annex B). Following is a description of the methods employed to gather the primary and secondary data.

- Document Review: The evaluator reviewed and referenced numerous project documents, including the project document, grant modifications, Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP), technical progress reports and other supporting project materials obtained during the fieldwork component. Annex C contains a complete list of the documents reviewed.

- Key Informant Interviews*:* The evaluator conducted interviews with a range of project stakeholders. In total, 62 stakeholders participated in virtual interviews, either individually or in small groups. These included project staff, adolescent beneficiaries participating in skills training and WBT activities, parents of beneficiaries, local and national government representatives, business associations and WBT business hosts, and international organizations. Table 1 identifies the stakeholder groups interviewed, their genders and sample characteristics.

- Other Evaluation Activities: The evaluator participated in an interactive online workshop on November 19, 2020 for YPCR youth graduates led by a psychologist to observe interactions during this activity.

**Table 1: Stakeholders Interviewed for Final Evaluation of YPCR**

| Stakeholder Group | Gender | | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | |
| YouthBuild International | 1 | | International support staff of YBI |
| YPCR Project Team (Paniamor) | 3 | 8 | YPCR project staff of Paniamor |
| YPCR Project Consultants | 1 | 2 | Researchers producing thematic reports from State of the Nation Program and National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) |
| Direct Beneficiaries | 5 | 10 | Youth participating in YPCR project activities in Limón |
| Parents of Direct Beneficiaries | | 6 | Parents residing in Limón and Siquirres |
| National Government | 2 | 5 | Vice Presidency; Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) including the offices of Vice Ministry, National Employment Office (DNE), Office of Response to and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Adolescent Workers (OATIA), and Social Security Office |
| Municipal Authorities | | 3 | Municipal officials from Limón and Siquirres |
| Business Associations | 1 | 3 | Caribbean Women's Business Chamber (CEMCA); Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Limón (CCITULCR); Costa Rican |

| Stakeholder Group | Gender | | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | |
| Host Employers | | 4 | Medium and small business owners in Limón participating as WBT hosts |
| Labor Unions | 1 | | National Federation of Agroindustry Workers and Related Industries (FENTRAGH) |
| Educational Institutions | | 2 | University College of Limón (CUNLIMON); Employment Habilitation Program |
| International Organizations and Networks | 1 | 1 | International Labor Organization; Global Apprenticeship Network |
| US Government | | 3 | USDOL and US Embassy in Costa Rica |
| **TOTAL = 62** | 15 | 47 | |

## Data Analysis

Driven by the evaluation questions, the document review and the stakeholder interviews generated significant raw qualitative data that was categorized, synthesized, and summarized.

## Stakeholder Meeting

The evaluator conducted a remote debriefing on November 20, 2020 with project staff of Paniamor Foundation and YouthBuild International. The meeting provided an opportunity to present preliminary findings, solicit clarification, and gather further input on areas of opportunity or concern that could affect project outcomes and their sustainability.

## Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

The evaluator observed utmost confidentiality related to sensitive information and feedback elicited during the individual and group interviews. The evaluator applied youth-sensitive and gender-sensitive interviewing approaches suggested per standard guidelines, such as the ILO- International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and UNICEF guidance. To mitigate bias during the data collection process and ensure maximum freedom of expression of stakeholders interviewed, the implementing partner staff were not present during interviews. However, implementing partner staff made introductions and facilitated the remote evaluation interview process.

## Limitations

The findings in this evaluation are based on information collected from project reports and background documents, and interviews with project staff and stakeholders. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no site visits and all evaluation interviews were conducted remotely via telephone or with video conferencing platforms. Also, during the period of interviews, Costa Rica experienced the effects of two hurricanes, which affected internet connectivity. The final selection of interviewees partially depended on the individuals' abilities to connect online with the evaluator. Every effort was made to include a representative sample of project beneficiaries from each of the four project cohorts and their parents, and representatives from the tripartite sectors participating in YPCR project activities. Stakeholder responses were triangulated with quantitative data to the extent possible to strengthen the accuracy and reliability of the evaluation.

Finally, the remote data collection process enabled the collection of data, but with the ability to connect only through remote conferencing systems, the physical observations and interactions achieved with in-person interviews were lacking. Using the remote conferencing format may have affected the veracity and completeness of the responses of stakeholders interviewed.

# Project Context and Description

## Project Context

Even before the country was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, Costa Rica's social and political context was characterized by instability. Issues such as rising unemployment rates, low high school completion rates, and a government struggling to find solutions to its national debt crisis were exacerbated once the country was forced to close all educational programs and services on March 16, 2020. The YPCR demonstration experience was among the services forced to close. The country also shut its borders to all foreign visitors, bringing its important tourism industry to a halt. This unstable social and political context is important to consider as a backdrop for the YPCR project since these external factors likely influenced the degree to which project objectives were attained.

**Government Changes and Turnover**: The three-year YPCR project straddled two government administrations. Then the YPCR project staff had to reintroduce and regain the support of government counterparts including the Ministry of Labor (MTSS), which had three ministers of labor, and within MTSS, three directors of the National Employment Directorate (DNE). Municipal government officials in Limón and Siquirres also changed at least once, which disrupted agreements made with previous administrations.

**Social Unrest**: Costa Rica has long been considered one of the most stable democracies in Latin America. However, that stability appears to be challenged during a period of increasing financial stress. The national debt is mounting and has more than doubled since 2010.[1] To reduce the national debt, the current administration (2018-2022) has considered several fiscal reforms, all of which would cause higher sales and property taxes. Over the past two years, these proposed fiscal reforms have spurred national protests as citizens have protested the implementation of any new taxes. In response to the public unrest, the government organized and participated in multi-sectoral dialogue to propose strategies to reduce the fiscal deficit. These talks concluded on November 20, 2020, with no proposed strategies deemed sufficient to address the deficit.

**Rising Unemployment**: In 2016 Costa Rica's national unemployment rate was 9.6% overall and 16.6% for youth ages 15 to 24. By the start of 2020, pre-COVID-19 pandemic, the national unemployment rate

[1] Geopolitical Intelligence Services, "Costa Rica: Challenges to Stability Mount," May 2020. https://www.gisreportsonline.com/costa-rica-challenges-to-stability-mount,politics,3178.html

had risen to 12.5% and the youth rate had climbed to 31%. By July 2020, mid-pandemic, the national unemployment had reached 24% and youth unemployment had skyrocketed to 48%.[2]

**High School Completion Rates and Academic Lag**: According to data from the most recent State of Education report, Costa Rica's high school completion rate in 2018 was 54%. Only 48% of Costa Rican youth aged 15 to 16 attended secondary education with no gaps or discontinuities. This trend in academic lag starts in primary education, as one-fifth of those who start first grade do not reach sixth grade in the six years established for that purpose.[3] In the Limón province, the site of YPCR's demonstration experience, high school completion rates are among the lowest in the country.

**Not studying and not working**: In the midst of these elevated rates of unemployment and academic lag are youth who are neither studying nor working. This subset of youth, known as *NiNis* (*"Ni estudian ni trabajan"*) in Spanish, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation as they face a scarcity of resources and limited access to quality jobs. Limón province, and in particular the three central counties participating in the YPCR demonstration experience, have some of the highest rates in the country of youth who are neither working nor in school.[4]

**Impact of COVID-19**: Once social distancing measures were announced in March 2020, the YPCR project had to quickly shift its focus from implementation of project strategies to meeting participants' most basic needs, including food security, income generation, online connectivity to continue receiving education and training, and peer support to alleviate anxiety and sense of isolation. The formal acts of project closure anticipated for June 2020 were postponed. Dissemination of project results and the delivery of final products to MTSS and other interested parties were also postponed. The results are discussed further in Project Findings.

## Project Description

In September 2016, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) awarded YouthBuild International (YBI) and local implementing partner Paniamor Foundation (PF) a four-year $3,000,000 Cooperative Agreement grant to implement the Youth Pathways to Leadership, Learning and Livelihoods project in Costa Rica (YPCR). On September 14, 2020, USDOL approved a funded extension to address emerging issues stemming from the coronavirus pandemic. This extended the period of performance by 8 months, revising the project end date to May 30, 2021, and increased the project budget by $250,000 to complete the enhanced objectives and expand the project's response to COVID-19.

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[2] Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC), *Encuesta Continua de Empleo*, 2016-2020. https://www.inec.cr/encuestas/encuesta-continua-de-empleo

[3] Programa Programa Estado de la Nación en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible Resumen Séptimo Informe Estado de la Educación / PEN.— 7 ed. – San José C.R. : Masterlitto, . 2019 https://www.uned.ac.cr/viplan/images/cppi/documentos/ESTADO-EDUCACION-2019-WEB.pdf

[4] División de Fiscalización Operativa y Evaluativa, Área de Fiscalización de Servicios Sociales. "Informe de la auditoría sobre las acciones de política pública respecto a la población joven que no estudia ni trabaja." December 2014. https://cgrfiles.cgr.go.cr/publico/docsweb/ninis/capitulo-3.html

The YPCR project aims to improve the country capacity to implement quality workplace-based training (WBT) alternatives for vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market by 1) promoting the improvement of laws and policies supporting WBT; 2) engaging employer and worker organizations to implement WBT; and 3) facilitating the improvement of public and private programs that aim to increase vulnerable youth access to WBT. The demonstrative experience of this project served as a model for implementing the support and active participation of the three types of actors needed to create quality WBT programs: vulnerable youth and their respective families, the private sector, and public institutions with related mandates.

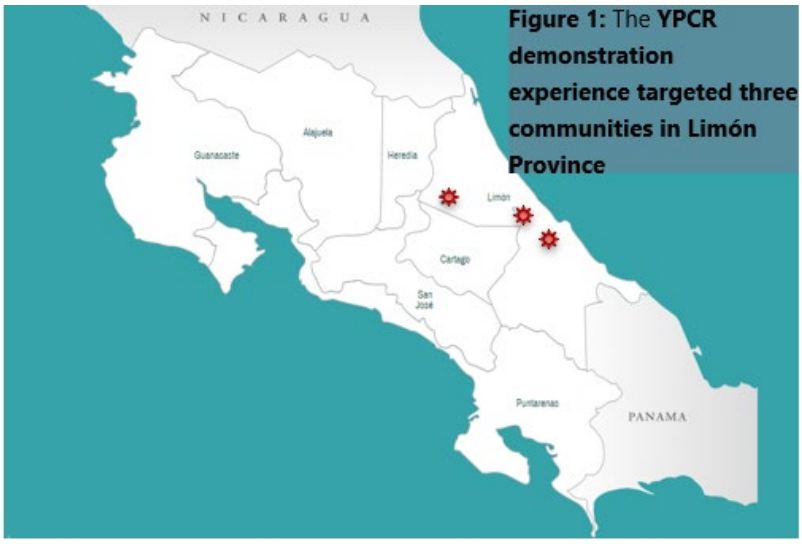

**Figure 1:** The **YPCR demonstration experience targeted three communities in Limón Province**

The project design included 3 long-term outcomes (OTC), 7 medium-term outcomes (MTO) and 12 outputs. The project design also included 26 indicators to measure project achievements. Because of Project Modification No. 4 (September 14, 2020), four new MTOs were added to cover the project's expansion to respond to COVID-19. Table 1 presents the YPCR Results Framework, which includes the long-term outcomes and all medium-term outcomes and their corresponding outputs.

**Table 2: YPCR Project Results Framework**

| **Project Goal:** To improve country capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives addressing vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market | |
|---|---|
| Long-term Outcomes (OTC) | Medium-term Outcomes (MTO) and Related Outputs |
| **OTC 1**: Laws and/or policies supporting quality WBT initiatives for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth, are improved and/or implemented by key stakeholders. | **MTO 1.1** Key stakeholders advised by the project formally agree on public policy proposals enhancing the implementation of quality WBT alternatives for vulnerable youth.<br>**Output 1.1.1** A quality WBT-related communication strategy designed and launched<br>**MTO 1.2** Key legislative commissions reference WBT-related evidence-based information provided by the project.<br>**Output 1.2.1** Leaders and authorities with mandates related to youth employment policies and or programs educated on WBT value.<br>***MTO 1.3** DNE-MTSS will approve and implement a workplan ensuring the smooth implementation of the WBT policy roadmap developed by YPCR. |
| **OTC 2** Employers, workers' organizations and other stakeholders implement good practices related to WBT for | **MTO 2.1** Attitudes about quality WBT for vulnerable youth amongst key stakeholders and society have been improved.<br>**Output 2.1.1** Key stakeholders have been trained on implementing WBT. |

| **Project Goal:** To improve country capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives addressing vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market | |
|---|---|
| Long-term Outcomes (OTC) | Medium-term Outcomes (MTO) and Related Outputs |
| youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth. | **Output 2.1.2** Vulnerable youth and their families informed about quality WBT opportunities<br>**MTO 2.2** Knowledge about good practices related to WBT for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth, is enhanced.<br>**Output 2.2.1** One demonstrative quality WBT initiative addressing vulnerable youth, including adolescents in context of conflict with the law and young parents up to age of 21, carried out.<br>**MTO 2.3** Companies and stakeholders trained on good practices create and /or pilot quality WBT, including vulnerable youth.<br>**Output 2.3.1** A Knowledge Bank of domestic and international good practices focused on WBT has been designed and developed.<br>**Output 2.3.2** A National Employment System capacity building strategy for the design and implementation of quality WBT, delivered.<br>***MTO 2.4** Vulnerable youth receive psycho-social support resulting from mental health needs that have emerged because of COVID-19 and are prepared to promote mental health strategies virtually and in-person.<br>***MTO 2.5** Food basket distribution will reduce vulnerable youth engaging in unsafe and hazardous working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. |
| **OTC 3** The quality of existing public and private programs that provide vulnerable and marginalized youth with necessary skills to enter WBT programs is improved. | **MTO 3.1** Coordination between service providers reaching vulnerable and marginalized youth and workplace-based training programs is strengthened.<br>**Output 3.1.1** Mapping and assessment of key contributing factors for a WBT strategy is developed<br>**Output 3.1.2** A Blueprint for a national WBT strategy has been created<br>**Output 3.1.3** Inter-institutional agreements for coordination at the local level have been defined<br>**MTO 3.2** Relevance of skills training programs available to vulnerable and marginalized youth is improved.<br>**Output 3.2.1** MTSS, INA and/or MEP and private sector partners integrate quality WBT skills as a component of their training programs.<br>**MTO 3.3** Training of institutional staff in charge of the provision of services for vulnerable youth has been institutionalized.<br>**Output 3.3.1** A training program for key staff of Empléate, INA and/or MEP, developed and delivered to authorities.<br>***MTO 3.4** Self-employment and entrepreneurship readiness will strengthen participating youth's resilience to mitigate the negative socioeconomic impact resulting from COVID-19. |

*Source: YPCR CMEP, October 2017 and Grant Modification No. 4, September 14, 2020*

**Four MTOs were added as part of Modification No. 4*

# Findings

The findings address the nine evaluation questions approved in the Terms of Reference (see Annex A). They are organized under three evaluation areas: project design, effectiveness, and sustainability.

## Project Design

**Question 1: To what extent was the project's theory of change valid and coherent given the implementing environment?**

**a) Were the project strategies relevant to the specific needs of project participants, communities, and other stakeholders?**

The YPCR project's theory of change (ToC) states that *if* the country's political, legislative, and labor framework is strengthened through close collaboration and permanent consultation with national institutions and other key stakeholders from the productive and social spheres, *then* the country's capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives addressing vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market is improved.

To assess the validity of the ToC after four years of implementation, the strategies outlined in the project's Results Framework (RF) were compared to the strategies implemented by the project (Table 3). The relevance of these strategies is discussed in Question 1a and their effectiveness is discussed in Question 2.

Adherence to the original project design in conjunction with the relevance of these strategies and their progress in meeting targets and outcomes (discussed in Question 2) helps determine the validity of the project's ToC.

**Table 3: Validity of the ToC during the Four-Year Implementation Period**

| Project Strategies Defined in RF | Project Strategies Implemented |
|---|---|
| **OTC 1**: Laws and/or policies supporting quality WBT initiatives for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth, are improved and/or implemented by key stakeholders. | |
| 1.1 A quality WBT-related communication strategy designed and launched.<br>1.2 Leaders and authorities with mandates related to youth employment policies and/or programs educated on WBT value.<br>1.3 Stakeholders adopt knowledge and attitudes on implementing WBT. | 1.1 The project designed and implemented a comprehensive communication strategy to sensitize stakeholders on the quality WBT model and to promote its benefits for youth in vulnerable conditions.<br>1.2 The YPCR project engaged relevant national authorities to present project objectives and encourage collaboration on labor issues affecting vulnerable and marginalized youth.<br>• At the national level, these included MTSS, MEP, (INA, and the Mixed Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS). Except for MTSS, the project did not pursue further engagement with these government entities.<br>• The project's public policy priorities and strategies were determined to be best aligned with the policies and strategies of MTSS, specifically DNE and OATIA. At the same time, there is no evidence of the YPCR project developing a strategic approach to |

| Project Strategies Defined in RF | Project Strategies Implemented |
|---|---|
| | public policy engagement or advocacy with a defined agenda and action plan.<br>• At the local level, the project collaborated with the municipal government of Limón to design, implement and validate the WBT model and promote its transfer to other municipalities or entities that work with vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market.<br>1.3 The YPCR project engaged stakeholders from government, employer and worker sectors in activities to raise awareness of WBT and the importance of social co-responsibility in addressing the employment and training needs of youth in vulnerable conditions. |
| **OTC 2** Employers, workers' organizations, and other stakeholders implement good practices related to WBT for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth. | |
| 2.1 Key stakeholders adopt knowledge and attitudes on implementing WBT.<br>2.2 Vulnerable youth and their families informed about quality WBT opportunities.<br>2.3 One demonstrative quality WBT initiative addressing vulnerable youth, including adolescents in context of conflict with the law and young parents up to age of 21, carried out.<br>2.4 A Knowledge Bank of domestic and international good practices focused on WBT has been designed and developed.<br>2.5 A National Employment System capacity building strategy on the design and implementation of quality WBT delivered. | 2.1. One of the central aims of the YPCR project was to promote social co-responsibility of multiple sectors—government, business, worker, and civil society—to effectively articulate the competencies and resources needed to implement a quality WBT program for vulnerable and marginalized youth.<br>2.2. Parents or persons responsible for each participant were informed of project goals and expectations of all participants. Their support was considered key to the success of the YPCR training program.<br>2.3 A demonstrative quality WBT initiative was implemented with the participation of vulnerable and marginalized youth in Limón.<br>2.4 Good practices and lessons learned on implementing WBT for youth were collected throughout the execution of the YPCR project, along with their respective lessons learned, and included in YPCR's Systematization Document.<br>2.5 The YPCR project developed a Roadmap for integrating the WBT model within NES programs as an alternative for vulnerable and marginalized youth. |
| **OTC 3** The quality of existing public and private programs that provide vulnerable and marginalized youth with necessary skills to enter WBT programs is improved. | |
| 3.1 Mapping and assessment of key contributing factors for a WBT strategy is developed.<br>3.2 A blueprint for a national WBT strategy has been created.<br>3.3 Inter-institutional agreements for coordination at the local level have been defined.<br>3.4 MTSS, INA, and/or MEP, and private sector partners integrate quality WBT skills as a component of their training programs. | 3.1 The YPCR project developed a "mapping" tool to identify possible partners and allies of the WBT intervention—businesses, local governments, and educational institutions.<br>3.2 The project developed a Blueprint to facilitate the methodological transfer of the WBT model and ensure a smoother replication process.<br>3.3 The project secured five inter-institutional agreements to coordinate actions at the local level.<br>3.4 The project conducted initial meetings with officials from MTSS, INA, and MEP. Of these, MTSS showed the greatest interest in and potential for integrating quality WBT skills as a component of its training programs targeting vulnerable and marginalized youth.<br>3.5 The project developed several online training programs for MTSS staff that are part of DNE. These also will be provided to other institutions that are part of NES. |

| Project Strategies Defined in RF | Project Strategies Implemented |
|---|---|
| 3.5 A training program for staff of Empléate, INA, and/or MEP developed and delivered to authorities. | |

*Source: YPCR CMEP, October 2017; Technical Progress Reports; and final evaluation interviews.*

**Discussion**: The YPCR ToC states that to strengthen the country's capacity to implement quality WBT inclusive of vulnerable youth, it is first necessary to strengthen the country's political, legislative, and labor framework through close collaboration with national institutions and other key stakeholders. The strategies outlined in the RF contributing to OTC 1—*improved laws and policies supporting quality WBT initiatives for vulnerable youth*—included the engagement of stakeholders with mandates related to youth employment programs and raising awareness on the value of WBT. The project initially engaged MTSS, MEP, and INA, the three key institutions with mandates related to youth employment readiness. After initial discussions with MEP and INA proved unproductive, the project narrowed its focus to supporting national public policy initiatives under MTSS, resulting in an incomplete approach to strengthening the country's capacity to implement quality WBT.

The strategies outlined to achieve OTC 2—*stakeholders implement good practices related to WBT for youth*—relied on accumulated documentation of good practices in implementing a quality WBT model. The demonstration experience in Limón closely adhered to these strategies in OTC2. It engaged a range of local stakeholders and provided information and tools to implement good practices into new or existing employment training programs for youth, including youth in vulnerable conditions.

Project strategies related to OTC 3—*improving the quality of existing public and private programs that provide vulnerable and marginalized youth with necessary skills to enter WBT programs*—generally adhered to the original project strategies, although there was no coordination with MEP and INA to integrate quality WBT skills into their employment training programs.

**Question 1.a: Were the project strategies relevant to the specific needs of project participants, communities, and other stakeholders?**

The project carried out several diagnostic assessments to better understand the needs of youth in vulnerable conditions who are excluded from work and study in Costa Rica. The project also conducted diagnostic assessments with local business organizations, worker organizations, and municipal officials to better understand Costa Rica's current labor market and the opportunities for youth to participate in employment readiness programs. The list of assessments conducted to analyze the specific needs of project participants and other stakeholders is as follows:

(1) A characterization study of youth excluded from work and study in three high-risk zones in Costa Rica[5]

[5] Vargas, Ana Jimena, "Juventud vulnerable en Costa Rica, una caracterización general," November 2017. (Study commissioned by YPCR Project.)

(2) The identification of youth who received public assistance through the National Children's Institute and/or IMAS
(3) Introductory meetings for identified youth and their families to raise awareness on the quality WBT initiative and to learn the specific employment and education needs of vulnerable and marginalized youth in Limón
(4) A survey of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Limón's young population toward municipal services in the areas of employment, employment readiness programs, and social assistance[6]
(5) A survey on the technical training and employment readiness programs available for youth in Limón[7]
(6) A survey on the jobs available in Limón.[8]

Table 4 outlines the specific employment and training needs identified by key stakeholder groups and the project strategies that addressed those needs.

**Table 4: Project Strategies Addressing Stakeholder Employment and Training Needs**

| Primary Needs Identified by Stakeholders | Project Strategies Addressing Stakeholder Needs |
|---|---|
| **Vulnerable and Marginalized Youth** | |
| • A formal school system that is continuously updating or adapting the curriculum to remain relevant for today's youth.<br>• Greater supply of and access to employment readiness programs or professional training.<br>• Greater awareness among youth of the training opportunities available to them.<br>• Greater awareness among government institutions and employers regarding the difficulties faced by youth in obtaining work experience.<br>• Greater awareness among government institutions and employers of the need for childcare for adolescent mothers. The majority of youth who neither study nor work are female (54%), and of these, 28% have children. | • Quality WBT offers an alternative model for youth development, one that emphasizes the skills needed to succeed in the workplace.<br>• The project advocated for a change in the minimum required age for youth toaccess MTSS's Empléate program, from 17 to 15 years of age.<br>• The YPCR project developed various communication tools and networks to raise awareness among youth in vulnerable conditions on training/learning opportunities.<br>• The participation of a wide range of stakeholders from governmental, employer, and labor sectors raised awareness about the barriers facing disenfranchised youth.<br>• The recruitment of young mothers into the demonstration project was a top priority, but childcare was not regarded as a service provided by the project. Youth participants with children stated that a parent helped them with childcare. |
| **Employer Organizations and Employers** | |

[6] Psicosociales S.A. "Conocimientos, actitudes y prácticas hacia los servicios municipales para la población adolescente y joven del cantón central de Limón en el ámbito del empleo, formación para el empleo y asistencia social," April 2019. (Study commissioned by YPCR Project.)

[7] Lentini Gilli, Valeria, "Informe descriptivo de la oferta de capacitación en los cantones central de Limón y Siquirres." 2019. (Study commissioned by YPCR Project.)

[8] Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC). "Encuesta Nacional de Puestos de Trabajo en Establecimientos. Resultados para Comercio, cantón central de Limón y distrito central de Siquirres." 2019. (Study commissioned by YPCR Project.)

| Primary Needs Identified by Stakeholders | Project Strategies Addressing Stakeholder Needs |
|---|---|
| • Effective education and training programs that prepare youth for the 21st century job market.<br>• Soft skills that emphasize commitment, initiative, teamwork, customer service, enthusiasm, self-control, and communication. | • The YPCR project gained the support of public and private institutions to offer relevant skills to vulnerable youth participating in the demonstration experience.<br>• The YPCR project team had initiated discussions with private sector stakeholder groups to jointly replicate the WBT model. This included the Board of Port Administration and Economic Development of the Atlantic Coast (JAPDEVA) as part of JAPDEVA's commitment to promoting economic development in the Caribbean region.<br>• Soft skills training was a core part of the WBT modeland prepared youth for a successful workplace-based training experience. |
| **Workers and Workers' Organizations** | |
| • Youth with higher levels of education and technical skills to match market needs.<br>• Opportunities for youth to apply academic knowledge in workplaces. | • The YPCR project gained the support and participation of a local union federation to help find suitable workplaces where youth could apply their knowledge and learn important job skills.<br>• The WBT model allows youth to develop technical skills that may be applied to their WBT experience. |
| **Local and National Governments** | |
| • Greater understanding of factors associated with exclusion of youth in vulnerable conditions from the formal education system and formative training programs.<br>• Education and training programs relevant for vulnerable and marginalized youth in Limón. | • The project commissioned a study on the factors associated with educational and labor market exclusion of vulnerable youth in Limón and Siquirres.<br>• The YPCR project participated in the region's multi-sectoral discussion table (*Mesa Caribe)* that is focused on economic and inclusive development in the Caribbean region. YPCR positioned WBT as a viable employment training alternative for youth who are outside of the formal education system. |

**Discussion:** The disenfranchised youth in Limón *need* opportunities to gain access to employment training programs and gain real work experience. Employers and labor unions *need* workers with sufficient technical and "soft" skills to succeed in the workplace. Local and national governments are grappling with the *need* to bring economic opportunity to the Caribbean region. The economic disparities between the Caribbean region and the rest of the country were the impetus for the formation of a multi-sectoral dialogue group (*Mesa Caribe*) to develop viable strategies for the region's economic and inclusive development. The YPCR demonstration experience showcased the WBT model as a viable alternative model that can be scaled up by both public and private stakeholders to prepare disenfranchised and marginalized youth for gainful employment.

## Project Effectiveness

**Question 2: To what extent has the project achieved its primary objectives and planned outcomes at the time of the evaluation, and is the project likely to achieve them by the end of the project? Specifically, to what extent have the activities in Limón contributed to the public policies and programs the project is promoting at the national/regional level? How?**

Project performance is reported to USDOL on a semi-annual basis as a part of the Technical Progress Report (TPR). This report includes data on USDOL's common indicators related to education (E1) and livelihood (L1), and project-specific indicators in the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP).

The YPCR project established end-of-project target values for each of the OTCs, and their corresponding MTOs and OTPs, and reports them to USDOL annually as part of the October TPR. As of October 2020, the YPCR project had achieved or surpassed 19 of the 26 indicator targets (73%). The project might have achieved all targets if all activities had not been halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The YPCR project was awarded a cost extension in September 2020 to conduct additional activities addressing the immediate food security and mental health issues of vulnerable youth who had participated in the demonstration experience. A review of YPCR progress toward meeting end-of-project targets for each indicator follows.

**A. Outcome 1: Laws and/or policies supporting quality WBT initiatives for vulnerable youth are developed and/or implemented by key stakeholders.**

**Table 5: YPCR Progress Toward End-of-Project Targets for OTC 1, by October 2020**

| Outcome and Output Indicators | | End-of-Project Target | Actual | Progress (%) as of Oct. 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OTC 1.1 | Number of legal proposals (laws or policies) approved and/or enforced by key stakeholders. | 2 | 3 | 150% |
| MTO 1.1.1 | Number of agreements by key stakeholders addressed to public policy proposals on WBT alternatives. | 3 | 7 | 233% |
| OTP 1.1.1.1 | Number of campaign strategies and supporting pieces designed and launched. | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| MTO 1.2.1 | Number of amendments and/or additions made to legal initiatives on WBT in line with evidence-based information. | 1 | 5 | 500% |
| OTP 1.2.1.1 | Number of leaders and authorities trained on WBT. | 80 | 114 | 143% |

**Discussion:** As of October 2020, the YPCR project reported the achievement of all indicator targets related to Outcome 1—development of laws and policies supporting WBT. The indicator for OTC 1.1 defines "laws and policies" as any type of law or policy initiative addressing WBT approved by the competent authorities. The project contributed to the following national laws and policies by commissioning two studies in support of the proposed modifications to legislation:

1) **MTSS Executive Decree No. 41.494**: As documented in the October 2018 TPR, the YPCR project contracted a legal expert to examine the legality of lowering the minimum age so youth between the ages of 15 and 17 might have access to public services and employment and training benefits. The study was initiated in the fall of 2018, but not completed until early 2019, although incomplete when the decree was passed, the project appears to have lent technical support for the passage of the Executive Decree on December 21, 2018, which lowered the minimum age of participation in state-sponsored technical training programs from 17 to 15.
2) **Amendments to Law No. 8922**: The YPCR project collaborated with OATIA to gain legislative approval for amending Articles 6 and 7 in Law 8922, which prohibits adolescents from engaging in dangerous work. YPCR commissioned two technical studies that supported adding two types of work to the list of prohibited work for adolescents.
3) **Approval and adoption of the WBT model by the municipality of Siquirres**: At the local level, the project successfully advocated for the approval and adoption of the quality WBT model as part of the municipal *Empléate* programs in Limón and Siquirres. Both municipalities approved the model as a viable training option for youth in vulnerable conditions, although only the municipality of Siquirres formally adopted the model before the March 2020 shutdown.

While the project achieved or exceeded the policy indicator targets, the changes or modifications to national laws are not a result of a strategic policy agenda with a defined goal and action plan supporting quality WBT. Public policy advocacy is a strategic process that includes a policy agenda with a defined goal and action plan. The commissioning of studies in support of new or modified legislation does not reflect public policy advocacy.

The approval and adoption of the WBT model by the municipality of Siquirres, however, does reflect public policy advocacy. The policy goal and action plan were clearly defined and executed and the resulting adoption of WBT demonstrates the potential for conducting a well-defined public policy strategy.

### B. Outcome 2: Employers, workers´ organizations, and other stakeholders implemented good practices related to quality WBT for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth.

**Table 6: YPCR Project Progress Toward End-of-Project Targets for OTC 2 (October 2020)**

| | Outcome and Output Indicators | End-of-Project Target | Actual | Progress (%) as of Oct. 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OTC 2.1 | Number of employers, workers' organizations, and other stakeholders reporting to be using WBT good practices | 24 | 43 | 179% |
| MTO 2.1.1 | % of persons reached through project direct interventions in Limón reporting improvement of perception about WBT | 50% | 98% | 198% |
| MTO 2.1.2. | Number of public statements by key stakeholders expressing positive perception about WBT | 40 | 40 | 100% |
| OTP 2.1.1.1 | Number of key stakeholders trained on implementing WBT | 200 | 339 | 170% |
| OTP 2.1.2.1 | Number of communication campaigns conducted | 4 | 4 | 100% |

| | Outcome and Output Indicators | End-of-Project Target | Actual | Progress (%) as of Oct. 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MTO 2.2.1 | Number of employers in Limón who demonstrate improved knowledge of WBT in an interview | 40 | 29 | 73% |
| OTP 2.2.1.1 (E1) | Number of children engaged in or at high-risk of entering child labor provided education or vocational services | 110 | 117 | 106% |
| OTP 2.2.1.2 (L1) | Number of households receiving livelihood services | 100 | 167 | 167% |
| OTP 2.2.1.3 | Number of young people in context of conflict with the law and/or young parents completing their training plan | 60 | 75 | 125% |
| MTO 2.3.1 | Number of quality WBT initiatives generated by companies and stakeholders | 20 | 0 | 0% |
| OTP 2.3.1.1 | Number of good practices documented in the Knowledge Bank | 40 | 40 | 100% |
| OTP 2.3.1.2 | Number of institutions that integrate the NES incorporating WBT in their programs, projects and/or services | 3 | 1 | 33% |

**Discussion:** As of October 2020, the YPCR project had met or surpassed 9 of the 12 indicator targets contributing to OTC 2—*stakeholder use of WBT good practices*. The number of employers, worker organizations, and other stakeholders using WBT good practices (OTC 2.1) reached an additional 79% over its target, which demonstrates significant interest among key community stakeholders in participating in the demonstration experience. USDOL's common indicators on education and livelihood targets (E1 and L1) were also achieved as a part of the activities under OTC 2. The relatively low targets established for these two indicators result from the project's direct services being a component of the demonstration experience whose purpose was to model the implementation of the quality WBT model.

The failure to meet indicator targets MTO 2.2.1, MTO 2.3.1, and OTP 2.3.1.2 can be attributed at least partially to the abrupt suspension of project activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The following analysis explains project efforts to meet these targets.

- *MTO 2.2.1: Employers in Limón who demonstrated improved knowledge of WBT*. The project's CMEP states that improved knowledge of WBT is measured through face-to-face interviews before and after project interventions. Due to COVID-19, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews; however, additional qualitative evidence suggests that employers' knowledge of WBT improved. In the April 2020 TPR, the results of a follow-up survey with 30 entrepreneurs who had participated in project activities showed a 70% improvement in knowledge of WBT.
- *MTO 2.3.1: Quality WBT initiatives generated by companies and stakeholders*. While there have been no quality WBT initiatives generated by companies and stakeholders, interviews conducted during the final evaluation suggested there exists a commitment to implementing quality WBT initiatives. In interviews with two employer organizations, representatives described their initial skepticism of the

model, and that they are now certain of its effectiveness to better prepare youth in vulnerable conditions with essential employment skills. One employer representative from the Caribbean region stated, *"Now that we have connected with our youth, even the ones we considered delinquents, we see that what they most need is opportunities."*

- *OTP 2.3.1.2: Institutions that are part of the NES incorporate WBT in their programs.* The NES[9] is expected to begin functioning in 2021 as an inter-institutional mechanism for coordination of the country's employment and training services through a new National Employment Agency, administered by INA. The establishment of the NES was temporarily put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, only MTSS has incorporated WBT into its training programs. There is no way to verify whether the institutions comprising the NES, such as INA and MEP, will incorporate WBT into their training programs since neither institution actively participated in the YPCR project.

**C. Outcome 3: The quality of existing public and private programs that provide vulnerable and marginalized youth with necessary skills to enter WBT training programs is improved.**

**Table 7: YPCR Project Progress Toward End-of-Project Targets for OTC 3 (October 2020)**

| Outcome and Output Indicators | | End-of-Project Target | Actual | Progress (%) as of Oct. 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OTC 3.1 | Number of public and private programs that formally adopt educational innovations | 4 | 3 | 75% |
| MTO 3.1.1 | Number of coordination mechanisms addressing WBT alternatives | 1 | 2 | 200% |
| OTP 3.1.1.1 | Number of mappings produced by the project | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| OTP 3.1.2.1 | Number of blueprints produced | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| OTP 3.1.3.1 | Number of local inter-institutional agreements signed | 4 | 5 | 125% |
| MTO 3.2.1 | Number of training programs directed to vulnerable youth, with contents aligned to labor market demands | 3 | 8 | 267% |
| OTP 3.2.1.1 | Number of institutions that integrate quality WBT skills into their programs, projects, and/or services | 3 | 1 | 33% |
| MTO. 3.3.1 | Number of institutions providing services to youth that integrate special training regarding vulnerable youth for their staff | 3 | 1 | 33% |
| OTP 3.3.1.1 | Number of staff trained | 20 | 0 | 0% |

*Source: YPCR Technical Progress Report, Annex A, October 2020*

[9] Core government institutions that form the NES include MTSS, MEP, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy, and INA, along with three employer and three labor representatives. Additional contributing participants include the National Institute for Women and IMAS.

**Discussion:** As of October 2020, the YPCR project had met or surpassed 5 of the 9, or 56% of the indicator targets that contribute to OTC 3—*improved quality of existing public and private programs that provide skills training to youth in vulnerable conditions*. Project staff had expected to achieve all indicator targets, but some of the key activities could not be completed due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic. For example, the project could not complete planned in-person trainings (OTP 3.3.1.1). However, the project adopted innovations by modifying its approach with developing several online training courses for MTSS staff and other interested stakeholders (OTC 3.1). These courses had not yet been implemented at the time of the final evaluation.

One central product completed was the YPCR Model Blueprint (OTP 3.1.2.1). The Blueprint is an online interactive description of the quality WBT model that allows users to understand the fundamentals, content, and techniques of the WBT methodology. It is part of a broader set of resources found in the Blueprint "toolkit" that was developed to position quality WBT as a viable employment training alternative for vulnerable youth and facilitate its replication. The Blueprint components can be found at the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1S1fzImB4zAWsErX04ijKmwqdAVYotQtS

**Question 3: To what extent were the recommendations from the midterm evaluation implemented and what were the results?**

The midterm evaluation provided seven recommendations for Youth Build International and Paniamor Foundation. Following the approval of the evaluation document, agreements were reached between USDOL and the grantee on the actions to be taken to address the recommendations. These actions were documented by USDOL in the DERT for YPCR, Interim Evaluation, April 2019. Table 8 summarizes these midterm recommendations, the agreed-upon actions, and the results of the actions taken.

**Table 8: Results of Actions Taken to Address Midterm Recommendations**

| Midterm Recommendations | Specific Actions to be Taken | Results of Actions Taken |
|---|---|---|
| (1) YPCR should continue its activities in San José but focus efforts of the three project components in Limón province. Several stakeholders believe job creation in Puerto Limón, where YPCR has its office and is developing the pilot, is not very promising in the short term due to the opening of a new port facility. YPCR could expand the intervention to other counties in the province of Limón to ensure WBT placement. YPCR has established relationships with enterprises in Siquirres and, according to a private sector stakeholder in Siquirres, new investment is coming into this area. It would make sense to extend YPCR activities to Siquirres should budgetary conditions allow it. | **RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED**<br>**Agreed-upon Actions:**<br>1. Participate in the regional economic development roundtable entitled Mesa Caribe.<br>2. Participate in negotiating potential partnerships with new stakeholders in the Siquirres canton and Limón province in general. This action is to lead to:<br>a) establishment of relations with a new cooperative comprising workers recently released from employment with companies who have closed their operations in Limón; | (1) The project's participation in the *Mesa Caribe* (National Dialogue Table) helped position the WBT model before national stakeholders as an effective employment training alternative for youth in vulnerable conditions.<br>(2) YPCR implemented the final cohort of the demonstration experience in Siquirres, which offered an additional local experience. The increased awareness of WBT among all stakeholders and the close follow-up by project staff led to a large number of local businesses agreeing to serve as WBT hosts. The project also established agreements with both private and public educational |

| Midterm Recommendations | Specific Actions to be Taken | Results of Actions Taken |
|---|---|---|
| | b) implementation of the fourth cohort of the demonstrative project in Siquirres, a different municipality within the province of Limón. | institutions in the region to provide basic skills training to YPCR youth. |
| (2) To expedite implementation in Limón, YPCR should assign a more experienced person to lead the actions there and decentralize decision-making to the pilot area. Local staff in Limón are very enthusiastic and committed to their work. Moreover, beneficiaries are very happy with the training and results. However, the staff members are young and need more experience. Leading the pilot program requires comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the YPCR project and proven experience in leading workforce development projects. While local staff is supported by more experienced staff based in San José and international YBI staff, the project would benefit from a qualified person with streamlined decision-making power to lead the efforts in Limón. | **RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED**<br>Agreed-upon Actions:<br>1. Relocate a senior staff member of the project team to Limón to oversee the coordination of program activities in the province. | (1) The project transferred a WBT specialist to Limón on March 1, 2019 who coordinated all activities at the local level. The move enabled localized decision-making and an increased ability of the project to promote and establish the active participation of local governmental offices and institutions, employer organizations, WBT host businesses, and worker organizations. |
| (3) To amplify the pilot's experience and maximize impact and sustainability, YPCR should allocate more financial and human resources to Limón. This would require hiring additional personnel to monitor the progress of beneficiaries in the WBT phases and tutor and mentor the post-WBT hosting process. | **RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED**<br>**Agreed-upon Actions:**<br>1. Hire a part-time private sector engagement specialist.<br>2. Explore a partnership with the Municipality of Siquirres.<br>3. Formalize partnerships with local stakeholders who also provide employment training. | (1) The project expanded the team in Limón to include a human resources specialist and a psychologist to better meet the needs of youth in vulnerable conditions.<br>(2) The municipality of Siquirres approved and adopted the WBT model and actively participated in the fourth cohort of YPCR participants.<br>(3) New alliances were established with local public and private sector stakeholders. |
| (4) YPCR should induce more active participation from the Limón mayor, INA, and MTSS at the local level. Discussions about the program have been carried out with these stakeholders, but they do not participate in implementing YPCR. They are important stakeholders to support the WBT implementation efforts and sustainability of the model. | **RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED**<br>**Agreed-upon Actions:**<br>1. Assign a project staff member to provide support to the local MTSS office in Limón.<br>2. Conduct a study, in partnership with the Municipality of Limón, to assess | (1) The local MTSS representative participated as a guest speaker to youth participants and as a WBT host during the demonstrative experience.<br>(2) The project commissioned a study, "Patterns and Factors Associated with Educational and Labor Market Exclusion of Young People in Areas with a High Degree |

| Midterm Recommendations | Specific Actions to be Taken | Results of Actions Taken |
|---|---|---|
| | youth attitudes and identify the municipality's available services, including its employment programs.<br>3. In partnership with MTSS, conduct a prospective study mapping technical education offerings and market demands in the cantons of project influence. Present findings to INA-Limón as an input for possible joint actions. | of Social Vulnerability in the Districts of Limón and Siquirres," completed in January 2020. The findings provided updated and relevant information to support the insertion or reinsertion of youth in vulnerable conditions into vocational training and job intermediation services.<br>(3) The project commissioned a prospective study, completed in January 2020, that identified technical education offerings and current job market demands. Efforts to meet with local INA officials to discuss possible collaboration were unsuccessful as local INA offices are prohibited from participating in external activities without prior approval by national officials. YPCR met with national INA officials in 2017, but there were no actions taken to meet with the new administration that began in 2018. |
| (5) To allow the project enough time to implement all the phases and cohorts required to test the pilot approach and its effectiveness, USDOL should extend the project's period of performance with a one-year no cost extension. To implement the evaluation recommendations and to promote sustainability, YPCR will need more time. As of September 2018, YPCR had expended one-third of the funds available for the project. They have enough funding for a one-year, no cost extension. | **RECOMMENDATION NOT ACCEPTED**<br>Basis for rejection:<br>1. With the expansion into Siquirres and intensification of collaboration with MTSS and local municipalities, we expect outcomes to be fully achieved and funds fully executed by project's end.<br><br>**USDOL FOLLOW UP COMMENT: This may be accepted—the project is developing a request for a one-year, costed extension (updated 6/4/19)** | (1) The project did not submit the recommended no-cost extension based on the assumption that all outcomes would be fully achieved, and funds fully executed. In October 2019, the project requested a cost extension for 24 months with additional activities to enhance project outcomes. This was rejected by USDOL. In September 2020, the YPCR project was awarded a shortened extension project focused on COVID-19 pandemic-related immediate food security, income generation, and mental health needs of YPCR youth graduates. |

| Midterm Recommendations | Specific Actions to be Taken | Results of Actions Taken |
|---|---|---|
| (6) YPCR should create organizational tools, such as minutes from meetings, to follow-up on agreements with partners. Thorough documentation is important because it tracks all important outtakes and resolutions reached, which can be reviewed afterwards by any stakeholder and be used, for example, as an agenda to follow-up in the next meeting. | **RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED**<br>**Agreed-upon Actions:**<br>1. Staff meetings occur every week and detailed notes are taken during every session.<br>2. Detailed minutes are taken and catalogued after every meeting with stakeholders.<br>3. Systematic documentation is taking place to provide the information for a comprehensive blueprint for replication to be achieved. | (1) Staff meetings in Limón were conducted weekly to discuss progress and emerging issues during the demonstration experience.<br>(2) Organizational tools were developed and used by project staff in Limón and San José, and documentation was made of agreements made with project allies and minutes of all meetings conducted with stakeholders.<br>(3) The project completed a Systematization Document, which served as a knowledge bank of the YPCR experience and highlighted good practices for related projects. |
| (7) YPCR should invest further in knowledge management and dissemination. The project has accrued and will continue to acquire a wealth of unstructured knowledge on the different topics and populations addressed through its interventions. Because WBT has the potential to serve as a model for other provinces in Costa Rica and in other countries in the region, YPCR should further systematize project experiences across all phases of the model. | **RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTED**<br>**Agreed-upon Actions**:<br>1. Systematically document all program efforts to create a comprehensive blueprint for project replication.<br>2. Launch segmented campaigns targeting key audiences to: a) position WBT as a viable educational pathway, eradicating erroneous ideas about WBT constituting a labor relationship; and b) promote WBT as an effective training model for enhancing employability of vulnerable youth among institutions with related mandates and the business community at local and national levels. | (1) A consultant was hired to develop the systematic documentation of the YPCR experience and a comprehensive blueprint for replicating the quality WBT model.<br>(2) The project effectively recorded all aspects of the YPCR experience in its Systematization Document. The project developed a Roadmap for MTSS to promote WBT as an effective employment training model for youth in vulnerable conditions. |

*Sources: YPCR Midterm Evaluation, March 2019; USDOL, DERT for YPCR, Interim Evaluation, April 2019; TPRs April 2019, October 2019, April 2020 and October 2020; YPCR Systematization Document; YPCR Blueprint; interviews with YPCR staff and stakeholders.*

**Discussion**: In response to the YPCR midterm evaluation, USDOL and YPCR developed an action plan to address the seven midterm recommendations. Recommendation 4, which encouraged joint actions with the local INA office, proved infeasible since the project opted not to pursue a cooperative agreement with the national INA officials who were installed in 2018 after initial meetings with officials in 2017 were unproductive.

Recommendation 5 suggested a 12-month no-cost extension based on delays in initiating the demonstration experience and the project's progress and expenditure rates at midterm. This recommendation was rejected based on the assumption that by the project's end date, all outcomes would be fully achieved, and all funds would be fully expended. By the project end date, this assumption proved largely true; however, a cost extension was still requested six months after the midterm evaluation to enhance project outcomes. This extension was rejected by USDOL, but in September 2020, YBI presented a short-term cost extension to ease the impact of COVID-19 on YPCR graduates and their families.

**Question 4: Did the project cause unintended results on its target communities and participants? If so, what were they?**

Several unintended results emerged during the project's demonstration experience that positively affected the young participants and/or target communities. The following is a description of six unintended results mentioned by project staff and stakeholders during the evaluation interviews and/or YPCR TPRs and Systematization Document.

**1. Positive impact of providing psycho-social support**: The provision of individual psycho-social support was not included in the original YPCR project design. However, the stressful conditions experienced by the youth participants during the project term led to a need to integrate a psychologist into the core technical team in Limón. During the weekly staff meetings, the technical team identified any irregularities in or special needs of the participating youth and follow-up actions by the staff psychologist and social worker. No written protocol was developed, but YPCR technical staff described the methodology used to provide psycho-social support for YPCR participants:

- Detection and discussion of irregularities or special needs in weekly staff meetings;
- Determination of the actions to take;
- Conversation with the young participants;
- Meeting with family members to agree on measures to implement.

Youth participants described the support provided by the psychologist as "natural" and "non-threatening," resulting in a positive impact on their personal lives.

**2. Exceeding expectations for personal transformation**: Although the project at its inception was intended to include direct work with vulnerable youth, the significant positive changes that would occur in participants' personal lives were not anticipated by project staff. Parents interviewed described their sons and daughters as having been apathetic, with no motivation to stay in school and few opportunities to obtain decent employment. Parents and employment mentors described what they considered, sometimes, a "complete transformation" in participants' attitude, motivation, and confidence. This is something that many project stakeholders never expected. One employer interviewed described his surprise at a YPCR graduation ceremony, "*I met many of these individuals at the beginning of the project. Now, seeing them and hearing their stories of transformation, you would never imagine they are the same individuals*." According to YBI and PF, however, project activities and methodologies were intentionally designed to promote and provoke this kind of personal transformation.

**3. Transformation of business sector attitudes toward vulnerable youth**: Business sector representatives interviewed described the negative views held by many businesses toward youth who are

neither working nor studying. These youth are perceived as incapable, immature, and members of a population at risk. For some, it was inconceivable these young people could learn a trade or be considered for hiring. Their participation in the YPCR project changed these attitudes as described by one workplace mentor: *"These youth are part of my community. I needed to stop complaining about their lack of productivity and become part of the solution."* In a follow-up survey conducted by project staff, the vast majority of these business representatives (73%) considered it very likely that they would incorporate vulnerable youth, such as those served by the YPCR project, into their companies.

**4. Positive impact of video stories:** The YPCR project produced live digital stories to illustrate the personal, social, and productive impact of the WBT model on vulnerable youth. These video stories show the WBT process, the methodology, the roles of young people, companies, and the community at large within the program, and the resulting benefits for the population. According to stakeholders in government, business, and worker sectors, the powerful communication tools utilized by the project increased buy-in and commitment to support the WBT model. The following is a link to one of the digital stories disseminated through social media platforms:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7LQtGA0UFM&feature=emb_logo

**5. YPCR Youth Graduate Network**: In early 2020, YPCR formed a network of 84 YPCR youth "graduates" as a way to help sustain the results of the demonstration experience. The network created a leadership group, called *Grupo Dinamizador,* to define their organizational structure and work plan through September 30, 2020. They formed a closed Facebook group of the YPCR youth graduates to offer peer-to-peer support, opportunities for community service, and capacity-building activities. The YPCR project staff will continue to support the Graduate Network during the YPCR project extension period.

**6. Pivoting to remote work**: With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, all end-of-project activities originally planned as face-to-face interactions were rapidly switched to online activities. What is remarkable is that it was possible to keep YPCR youth graduates relatively engaged by ensuring access to cell phones and the internet. The rapid digital transformation of all project trainings and activities made it possible for the project to stay on track and to achieve the vast majority of the planned outputs and outcomes.

**Question 5: How have the monitoring and evaluation systems (CMEP, pre-situational analysis, etc.) been implemented and are they being used to identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies, and make informed decisions?**

**a) How effective is the project's monitoring of direct beneficiaries (youth in Limón)?**

The YPCR project developed and implemented a M&E system that included two principal sub-systems: (1) performance monitoring to measure progress at the objective, outcome, and output levels; and (2) direct beneficiary monitoring or tracking of the progress of each young participant in the demonstration experience. Following are findings related to the use or application of these two sub-systems.

**Performance monitoring system**: Performance monitoring measures progress toward the stated project objectives. Ideally, the data are used to make informed decisions and implementation adjustments. The M&E specialist aggregates and reports to the project director and YBI all performance monitoring data. Several procedures were identified in the CMEP to cross-check the completion and accuracy of the data reported to USDOL. The YPCR or project leadership staff interviewed stated that they were kept apprised

of project progress. According to project staff, team meetings led by the project director were held irregularly and there were no instances in which monitoring results were discussed or used for making informed decisions regarding project activities. Staff perceived performance monitoring as more mechanical than useful for guiding informed decisions.

**Direct beneficiary monitoring system**: Project M&E staff developed an electronic single file system for each direct beneficiary, which included information on education, housing, health, employment, personal goals, and social relationships. This monitoring sub-system was used to keep track of youth participant status, trainings and scholarships received, WBT placement sites, and any issues encountered or that needed follow-up in the demonstration project. The YPCR technical team in Limón met weekly to discuss the performance of each participant and coordinate actions. The data collected allowed project staff to make informed decisions regarding each participant, contributing to the success of the demonstration experience.

**Question 6: What were the key internal or external factors that limited or facilitated the achievement of project outcomes? Specifically:**

a) **To what extent was the YPCR project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?**
b) **How did the YPCR project pivot strategies due to the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the results?**

The key internal and external factors that facilitated or limited achievement of project outcomes are presented in Table 9. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the project's ability to pivot strategies in response are discussed separately.

**Table 9: Factors Facilitating or Limiting Achievement of Project Outcomes**

| Factors Contributing to Project Outcomes | Factors Limiting Project Outcomes |
|---|---|
| • **The quality of the WBT model:** A key component contributing to the success of the WBT model was the preparation of participants' "soft skills." As a result of soft skills training, youth participants showed greater initiative, teamwork, responsibility, and commitment, leading to successful workplace-based training experiences.<br>• **Multidisciplinary YPCR technical team:** The composition of the technical team responsible for implementing the demonstration experience included specialists in psychology, social work, M&E, and work-based training. Together, they provided a holistic and integrated approach to supporting the young participants, one that considered the social factors that could support or impede successful outcomes for each young participant.<br>• **Key alliances**: YPCR formed alliances with public institutions and private organizations in the Caribbean region necessary for creating conditions that would support a quality WBT model.<br>• **Political support of MTSS**: MTSS demonstrated an early interest in supporting the YPCR project and in positioning | ▪ **Changes in National Government**: The YPCR project began its outreach to national government stakeholders in 2017, but a year later, a new administration was installed, necessitating a repeat of this introductory process.<br>▪ **Changes in Local Government**: The project had allied with the vice-mayor's office in Limón; however, with the turnover of both the vice-mayor and municipal council in 2020, the YPCR project lost traction in achieving the formal adoption by the municipal council of the quality WBT model as a training alternative for vulnerable youth.<br>▪ **Absence of partnership with MEP and INA**: The YPCR project did not reach a collaboration agreement with MEP nor INA. Both institutions are key actors in Costa Rica's educational reform on |

| Factors Contributing to Project Outcomes | Factors Limiting Project Outcomes |
|---|---|
| it as a viable job training alternative for vulnerable and marginalized youth.<br>• **Political support of central government**: Costa Rica's central government has prioritized the economic and inclusive development of the country's Caribbean region, focusing on the education and employment training needs of youth, including vulnerable youth.[10] This national policy priority was important in paving the way for the success of this project.<br>• **Results based on a local experience**: The demonstration experience provided an opportunity to exhibit and discuss the effectiveness of the WBT model based on an experience in this nation. Before this, discussions about project results were based on experiences in other countries. | Dual Education (Law 9728)[11] that combines school-based education with workplace learning. The law stipulates that dual education strategies should be "inclusive" of vulnerable populations, such as those who are outside of the formal education system (Article 12). Several multi-partite stakeholders mentioned the "missed opportunity" for YPCR not to have formed alliances with MEP or INA or the Dual Education Advisory Committee to position the WBT model as an alternative model inclusive of vulnerable youth. In defense, MTSS officials expressed full confidence that the WBT model would be expanded into all employment training programs that would form part of the pending inter-institutional National Employment System, which includes MEP and INA. |

**Discussion**: The list of factors that contributed to the achievement of YPCR project outcomes reveals the importance of creating the conditions necessary for implementing a quality WBT model. Establishing a multidisciplinary project team to support the vulnerable youth participants and identifying a local "ecosystem" of public and private allies that can share the responsibility of preparing youth in vulnerable conditions for the job market are critical for successful model implementation. The completion of the demonstration experience was a key outcome because it provided concrete results based on local experience to share with multi-sector stakeholders. However, a factor that may have limited project outcomes focuses on the missed opportunity in forming alliances with MEP and/or INA. The project opted not to pursue collaboration with these institutions after initial meetings in 2017 were unproductive, but these alliances would have positioned WBT before national stakeholders as a viable alternative work-based training program inclusive of youth in vulnerable conditions.

[10] The *Mesa Caribe* was installed by the central government to operate as a multi-sectoral workgroup to identify and bring forward key initiatives for economic and inclusive development of the Caribbean region. Identified priorities and specific follow-up actions established by the Mesa Caribe are listed on the central government website: https://www.presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2020/11/dialogo-territorial-en-el-caribe-prioriza-acciones-estrategicas-en-turismo-logistica-y-agroindustria/

[11] Ley 9728, "Educación y Formación Técnica Dual," Legislative Assembly, 12 September 2019. http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=89820&nValor3=118020&strTipM=TC

**Question 6a: To what extent was the YPCR project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?**
**Question 6b: How did the YPCR project pivot strategies due to the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the results?**

By April 2020, YPCR project staff had identified four key activities related to Outcomes 1 and 2 that could not be completed as planned due to the social distancing measures that the Costa Rican government put into place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 10 outlines the project strategies affected, the actions taken to mitigate effects, and the results, as of October 2020.

**Table 10: YPCR Strategies Affected by COVID-19, Mitigation Actions, and Results of Actions Taken**

| Strategies Affected by COVID-19 | Mitigation Actions Identified in April 2020 | Results of Project Actions as of October 2020 |
|---|---|---|
| Transfer of the YPCR model to the municipalities of Siquirres and Limón. | The provision of technical assistance by the project to the two municipalities committed to replicating the YPCR model was put on hold because both municipalities closed operations from early March to mid-April due to the pandemic. Activities would be rescheduled for late May if conditions allowed. | • Siquirres—Municipal officials confirmed their continued interest in and commitment to replicating the WBT model in 2021. The implementation will fall under the responsibility of the Municipality's Social Development Programs.<br>• LimónThe municipality formally notified the YPCR team it cannot replicate the model because of the direct impact of the pandemic to its budget. If conditions change and it is deemed feasible, municipal officials will resume discussions about replication, likely in quarter two of 2021. |
| Completion of Roadmap (Output 2.3.1) | The Roadmap was conceived as a joint contribution of YPCR and MTSS-DNE to the Caribbean economic resurgence process that the central government will lead in 2021. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, per the Presidency's request, DNE is focused on the operation of social assistance programs to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. The delivery date of the Roadmap product is rescheduled for the first half of September 2020, if conditions allow. | • The validation and implementation of the preliminary version of this product is an activity that MTSS does not consider feasible to take on before the first quarter of 2021, due to its focus on mitigating the economic impact of COVID-19. Therefore, it has been incorporated into the workplan for the cost-extension phase, Oct. 2020 to May 2021. |
| Strengthening of YPCR Graduate Network | Adaptation of leadership capacity-strengthening and community engagement with the YPCR Youth Graduate Network was to be transferred from an in-person to an online approach. In this context and | The COVID-19 pandemic has led to record unemployment in Costa Rica. By July 2020, mid-pandemic, national unemployment reached 24% and youth unemployment skyrocketed to 48%.[12] A survey of 63 YPCR |

[12] Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC), *Encuesta Continua de Empleo*, 2016-2020. https://www.inec.cr/encuestas/encuesta-continua-de-empleo

| Strategies Affected by COVID-19 | Mitigation Actions Identified in April 2020 | Results of Project Actions as of October 2020 |
|---|---|---|
| | considering the limitations of access and connectivity required for this strategy, the project redirected funds to cover two urgent needs identified by the youth network's leadership group:<br>a) Provide cellphones and connectivity to support ongoing capacity-building and peer-to-peer support<br>b) Provide food baskets to contribute to food security of youth and their families and to prevent youth from turning to dangerous and exploitative work to prevent hunger. | youth graduates found that in 43% of graduates' households, the primary income earner had lost his or her job. Youth respondents identified lack of food as their primary concern.<br>The project redirected funds to cover urgent needs emerging from the unemployment and economic crises from March to September 2020. These activities have been incorporated into the workplan for the costed-extension phase, October 2020 to May 2021. |
| Business sector workshops | The project's principal partner for this activity is the Limón Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism (CCITUL) and its members. This activity has been cancelled due to the impact that the pandemic has had on tourism at the national and local levels. As an alternative, a Business Mentoring Workshop will be carried out online after consultation with the business sector partners. | The business chamber in Limón reported that 60% of its affiliates have suspended their business activities because of the pandemic and are waiting for a change in conditions that allows them to resume their business activities. As part of the 8-month extension phase, YPCR staff are working with CEMCA to develop self-employment and entrepreneurship skills of youth participants to boost their ability to earn an income. |
| Follow-up of youth participating in Cohorts III and IV | Placing youth in the final cohort into workplace-based training was cancelled in March 2020 with no possibility of rescheduling due to the end of the Limón demonstration in June 2020. | The follow-up of all four cohorts has continued online as part of the continuous training and support offered to the YPCR Graduate Network. |

**Discussion**: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to historically high unemployment rates in Costa Rica and has left many of the YPCR youth participants and their families in vulnerable conditions. The YPCR project shifted its workplan to two lines of action: (1) the mitigation of risks associated with the pandemic and its effects on YPCR graduates and their families; and (2) finalizing the design of the WBT Blueprint to enable the methodological transfer of the model and to ensure a smoother replication process. All products originally proposed by the project were completed and formally delivered to partners and allies at a virtual accountability event held on September 30, 2020. Completion of the Roadmap remains viable and has been incorporated into the workplan for the 8-month costed-extension phase which runs through May 2021.

## Sustainability

**Question 7: Which project activities/initiatives are most likely sustainable and transferable to key stakeholders (at the community, municipal, departmental, and national levels) before the project ends? What factors contributed to this sustainability?**

The YPCR sustainability strategy as outlined in the October 2019 and 2020 TPR annexes is focused on ensuring the integration and continuation of the WBT model or WBT best practices into programs offered by MTSS and employment trainings offered by the private sector and local municipalities. Toward this end, the YPCR project developed two products to enable transferability of the quality WBT model and enhance sustainability of the project´s impact. The two products include (1) a **Roadmap**, specifically intended for use by MTSS-DNE, to outline the path for integrating WBT into employment training programs that will form part of the pending NES, and (2) a **Blueprint** (Figure 2) for the methodological transfer of the quality WBT model into public and private sector employment training programs. The Roadmap is expected to be completed during the YPCR cost-extension phase. The Blueprint and a corresponding toolkit of resources has been completed and is available to parties interested in replicating the quality WBT model. The Blueprint components can be found at the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1S1fzImB4zAWsErX04ijKmwqdAVYotQtS

**Figure 1: The YPCR Model Blueprint infographic**

**Factors Contributing to the Sustainability of Project Initiatives**: Aside from the two YPCR project products described above, several other project initiatives are likely to be sustained after the project ends. These initiatives and the factors contributing to their sustainability are identified in Table 11.

**Table 11: Factors Contributing to the Sustainability of Project Initiatives**

| Sustainable Project Initiatives | Factors Contributing to the Sustainability of Project Initiatives |
|---|---|
| Policy initiatives supporting WBT for vulnerable youth | • At the national level, YPCR supported policy initiatives directly related to employment readiness and protection of marginalized youth. One initiative that achieved success was MTSS Decree 41.494, passed in December 2018, which ensures access to state-funded employment training programs to vulnerable youth as young as 15 years of age. YPCR demonstration experience participants benefitted from this lower age limit by enrolling in state-funded employment training programs and by increasing awareness of other vulnerable youth regarding the lowered minimum age limit. |
| Engagement of local governments | • The municipalities participating in the YPCR project demonstrated interest in the viability of designating state employment training resources to support the inclusion of the quality WBT model as an alternative for youth in vulnerable conditions. |
| Impact of demonstration experience and awareness campaign | • The demonstration experience showcased the WBT model for vulnerable youth, and its youth graduate network evolved into a powerful advocacy group to call attention to the education and training needs of marginalized youth. Their personal stories disseminated as part of the YPCR communication strategy illustrated the potential impact a quality WBT model can have on the lives of vulnerable and |

| Sustainable Project Initiatives | Factors Contributing to the Sustainability of Project Initiatives |
|---|---|
| | marginalized youth. Ongoing commitment of the youth graduate network is likely, because of the potential for the model to be scaled up at the municipal level, leading to expansion of the model's benefits within the youth graduates' own communities and to greater numbers of youth in similar conditions. |
| Social co-responsibility of MTSS | • The demonstration experience greatly increased commitment at the national government level of the concept of shared responsibility for attending to the employment training needs of marginalized youth. One success is that the National Employment Directorate (MTSS-DNE) intends to promote the integration of WBT good practices within its existing employment readiness programs and in those that will form part of the inter-institutional NES. |
| Social co-responsibility of the business sector | • The demonstration experience greatly increased commitment among employers of the concept of shared responsibility for attending to the education and training needs of marginalized youth. Participating business chambers in Limón helped to recruit host business sites and workplace mentors. The close involvement of Limón's business sector strengthened its notion of shared responsibility. The continued promotion of the quality WBT model by the Caribbean business chambers is likely to generate the interest of additional local businesses in participating as WBT host sites and mentors for youth in vulnerable conditions. |
| Social co-responsibility of worker organizations | • The demonstration experience greatly increased commitment among worker organizations of the concept of shared responsibility for attending to the education and training needs of marginalized youth. Caribbean union participation in the YPCR project raised the awareness and commitment to ensuring "our" youth in vulnerable conditions have access to job training based on current market needs. |
| Social co-responsibility of public and private technical training institutions | • The demonstration experience greatly increased commitment among public and private technical and training institutions[13] of the concept of shared responsibility for attending to the education and training needs of marginalized youth. The participation of public and private technical training institutions in the YPCR demonstration experience increased their sense of shared responsibility for ensuring that youth in vulnerable conditions have access to basic skills training. This was the first time these institutions had enrolled students without a high school diploma and the high levels of student engagement and academic performance enhanced their commitment to ongoing participation in the program. These institutions stressed the importance of youth returning to school to complete a basic education besides the work-based training. |

[13] Public and private technical training institutions participating in the YPCR project include the University College of Limón (CUNLIMON) and the Employment Habilitation Program. In addition, the Caribbean business association (CCITUL) and the labor union (FENTRAGH) offer employment training.

**Discussion**: The demonstration experience was the project activity that created the conditions of social co-responsibility needed for successful implementation the quality WBT model. The participation and commitment of the partners in national and local government, the business sector, worker organizations, and training institutions was essential for the successful outcomes of the demonstration experience and its goals. The participating project partners modeled the shared responsibility that resulted in effective employment training programs inclusive of vulnerable and marginalized youth. Each partner emerged with a sense of their own value in the process and the importance of their continued engagement in promoting employment readiness and the protection of marginalized youth. Along with the Blueprint as a tool for enabling model transfer and replication, this sense of commitment by multiple partners to achieving project outcomes is likely to be a powerful factor in sustaining project initiatives and activities.

### Question 8: How could the project have improved its sustainability efforts?

Despite the accomplishments of the project in developing a shared sense of commitment to promoting employment readiness programs inclusive of marginalized youth and in developing alliances with public- and private-sector partners at the national and local levels, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected the YPCR project's capacity to solidify sustainable initiatives and activities.

However, with or without the limitations placed by the COVID-19 pandemic, one strategic action is likely to have improved project sustainability. That strategy focuses on **strengthening the project partnership with municipal officials**. In implementing the demonstration experience, YPCR project officials provided the municipalities of Limón and Siquirres with institutional support, but they fell short of engaging these municipalities in the step-by-step process of model implementation. For example, among the primary concerns of municipal authorities were project implementation costs and feasibility. Had project staff worked more closely with each municipality to collectively determine the implementation costs and to collaboratively address issues of feasibility, greater buy-in by the municipalities to ensure that the quality WBT mode was implemented within their municipal training programs is likely to have been a result.

# Lessons Learned and Promising Practices

**Question 9: What are promising practices and lessons learned that could benefit similar projects or future programming in Costa Rica?**

The YPCR project made a concerted effort to document lessons learned and good practices throughout the project implementation period and are included in the YPCR Systematization Document. The following list of lessons learned and promising practices are related specifically to the evaluation areas: project design, project effectiveness, and sustainability.

## Lessons Learned

- **Role of municipal governments**: The project design should include a specific strategy for increasing the role of municipal governments in the initial stages and throughout implementing the demonstration experience. This will increase understanding by municipalities of the model's feasibility and benefits and will facilitate and accelerate model implementation and integration into municipal employment training programs.

- **Key government alliances:** Establishing alliances with key governmental institutions at the local level is often impossible without first cooperatively agreeing with national level officials. With the INA office in Limón, local representatives expressed an interest in participating in the YPCR demonstration experience; however, this proved infeasible because a cooperative agreement had not been established between YPCR and the national INA office. The decision to not follow up with INA officials in the current administration resulted in a missed opportunity to collaborate with a key institution and effectively strengthen the country's capacity to implement quality WBT programs inclusive of vulnerable youth. However, the availability of local results provides important information to promote the establishment of future cooperative agreements since discussions with national officials are often more effective once the results from a local experience are available.

- **Technical assistance during the transfer process**: The development of the YPCR Model Blueprint and related Toolkit will facilitate the methodological transfer of the quality WBT model to public and private institutions or programs; however, the transfer process could be strengthened if it came with technical assistance from project staff during the initial rollout period. The project did not have the opportunity to accompany a transfer process during the project timeline, mostly due to the impact of the pandemic.

- **Public policy advocacy**: Effective advocacy strategies to influence public policy are based on a structured approach that identifies the problem or issue, defines the policy goal, and executes an action plan. Absent a clearly defined framework, efforts to affect policy change or action may cause the execution of disjointed activities with little impact on promoting the project outcome.

## Promising Practices

- **Social co-responsibility**: The successful implementation of the quality WBT model is based on shared responsibility between public and private sector partners to prepare vulnerable youth for the job market. When the "whole community" is part of the learning environment, the collaborative

approach provides marginalized youth with a community of mentors, which helps stimulate their interest in life-long learning.

- **Multidisciplinary project team**: The incorporation of a project team with training in psychology and social work provided holistic and integrated support for the young participants, enabling the consideration of social factors that could support or impede successful outcomes for each young participant.

- **YPCR Youth Graduate Network**: Youth who have completed the WBT model can help raise awareness about the employment training opportunities for other youth in vulnerable conditions. Their role as advocates for the replication of the quality WBT model personalizes the results of the project and its potential impact on other youth in vulnerable conditions.

- **Training in "soft skills"**: Soft skills training that emphasizes commitment, initiative, teamwork, customer service, enthusiasm, self-control, and communication are a core part of preparing youth for a successful workplace-based training experience and a key component contributing to the success of the WBT model.

# Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the key findings pertaining to the project design, project effectiveness, and sustainability.

## Project Design

- **Validity of Project Design**: Throughout the four-year implementation period, the YPCR project strategies generally adhered to the strategies outlined in the project's RF with the notable exception of collaborating with MEP and INA to integrate quality WBT into their existing training programs.

- **Relevance of Project Design:** The YPCR project design directly addressed the needs of marginalized youth excluded from the labor market. Youth in vulnerable conditions need to gain access to quality employment training programs and relevant workplace experience; employers and unions need to have access to a young workforce with sufficient technical and "soft" skills to succeed in the workplace; and local and national governments need to ensure state-funded education and training programs are inclusive of youth in vulnerable conditions.

## Project Effectiveness

- **Project Achievement of Targets and Outcomes:** As of October 2020, the YPCR project had achieved or surpassed 19 of the 26 indicator targets (73%). The project reported achievement of all indicator targets related to Outcome 1—*development of laws and policies supporting WBT*. The project met or surpassed 9 of the 12 indicator targets contributing to OTC 2—*stakeholder use of WBT good practices*. The project had met or surpassed 5 of the 9, or 56% of the indicator targets that contribute to OTC 3—*improved quality of existing public and private programs that provide skills training to youth in vulnerable conditions*. Regarding the effectiveness of public policy strategies under OTC 1, the public policy strategy at the local level—the approval and adoption of the quality WBT model by a local municipality— reflects successful public policy advocacy. The policy goal and action plan were clearly defined and executed, and these actions resulted in the adoption of quality WBT. At the national level, the studies commissioned by the project contributed to the knowledge

base that may have led to policy modifications or amendments. However, these actions did not constitute a strategic approach to public policy engagement or advocacy with a defined agenda and action plan supporting WBT.

- **Factors Contributing to Achievement of Project Outcomes**: The YPCR project successfully identified and created the conditions necessary for implementing the quality WBT model in Limón. The project's inclusion of a multidisciplinary technical team was key to providing the necessary support for youth in vulnerable conditions. The alliances with key public and private institutions led to successful social co-responsibility in addressing the employment training needs of vulnerable youth. The local demonstration experience produced concrete results that demonstrated the effectiveness of the quality WBT model based on a local experience.

- **Factors Inhibiting Achievement of Project Outcomes:** The completion of the YPCR Blueprint and "toolkit" will facilitate the methodological replication of the quality WBT model; however, end-of-project activities were cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting activities to strengthen project outcomes. It is unlikely these activities will be completed during the 8-month extension that ends in May 2021 because of the ongoing activity restrictions due to the pandemic. Consequently, the project has pivoted its focus to implement emergency measures to address food security and psycho-social issues of YPCR youth graduates. Furthermore, key stakeholders including government, employer, and worker sectors are now focused on the immediate economic and employment crises facing Costa Rica during the pandemic.

- **Response to COVID-19**: The COVID-19 pandemic, which started six months before the project's original end date, led to historically high unemployment rates in Costa Rica, affecting the well-being of YPCR youth participants and their families. The project appropriately pivoted on activities and redirected funds to address the urgent needs resulting from the health crisis. All project products originally proposed were formally completed by September 30, 2020, and completion of the Roadmap is likely during the 8-month costed-extension phase which runs from October 2020 through May 2021. At the same time, with little assurance that the project will complete activities that will strengthen project outcomes, there is a risk of losing traction on progress made at the national and local levels toward the goal of strengthening country capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives for vulnerable youth.

- **Results of Project Midterm Evaluation**: In response to the results of the midterm evaluation recommendations made in April 2019, the project actions implemented were largely aligned with the agreed-upon actions in USDOL's DERT for YPCR. However, Recommendation No. 4 was only partially fulfilled because without a cooperative agreement between YPCR and the national INA office, the recommended alliances with local INA officials were not feasible.

- **Unintended Results**: Various unintended, but encouraging results were identified. These included the positive impact of providing psycho-social support; the transformation of business sector attitudes toward vulnerable youth; and the YPCR Graduate Youth Network that demonstrated their leadership through peer-to-peer support, community service, and advocacy efforts supporting the quality WBT model. These unintended results support the notion that the demonstration experience implemented in Limón far exceeded stakeholder expectations and showcased the potential for the quality WBT model to transform the lives of youth in vulnerable conditions.

- **Performance Monitoring**: The YPCR performance monitoring system kept project staff apprised of progress toward the stated objectives. However, its use may not have reached its full potential for

making informed decisions regarding adjustments needed to strengthen project outcomes. The YPCR direct beneficiary monitoring sub-system served as a dynamic and practical system that was regularly used to follow the progress of young participants and to enable timely action to correct irregularities or attend to concerns.

### Sustainability

- **Sustainable Initiatives:** The YPCR project succeeded in promoting shared responsibility among public- and private-sector stakeholders to participate in addressing the employment and training needs of marginalized youth. The YPCR Model Blueprint will facilitate the methodological transfer of the quality WBT model into public and private sector employment training programs, but the ongoing commitment of public and private sector stakeholders will be required for scaling-up of the model. Efforts to scale up would be strengthened if it included ongoing technical assistance from project staff during the initial roll out period.

- **Strengthening Sustainability**: By holding regular discussions with local municipal officials to involve them with initial development of project strategies and throughout the demonstration experience, the project could have facilitated the transfer of the WBT model at the municipal level and augmented the model's perceived value by other municipalities as a desirable component of municipal employment training programs. That greater perceived value is likely to have been sustained and would have promoted the transferability of the WBT model to additional municipalities.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are directed to YBI, PF, and USDOL to strengthen the outcomes of the YPCR project, or to improve future programming of child labor projects with similar goals.

**Immediate Recommendations for YouthBuild and Paniamor:**

1. **Follow through with MEP and INA to discuss new opportunities for collaboration**: YPCR should meet with members of the Dual Education Advisory Committee (*Comisión Asesor y Promotora de la Educación Dual*) to explore options for promoting the quality WBT model as an effective alternative for youth in vulnerable conditions. This is the opportune moment to position the quality WBT model as operational support for the Dual Education Law mandate to provide services to vulnerable populations, including youth who may be outside of the formal education system (Law 9728, Article 12).

2. **Strengthen the transfer process**: YPCR should strengthen the transfer process of the quality WBT model to municipal employment training programs. The end-of-year activities cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic should be reinstated to the degree possible during the current cost extension period. To strengthen the transfer procedure to municipal employment training programs, YBI and PF should submit a request to USDOL for an additional cost extension with sufficient time to provide follow-up to all municipalities expressing interest in implementing the WBT model. The provision of technical assistance will promote the appropriate use of the YPCR Model Blueprint and ensure that the conditions necessary for implementing the quality WBT model are in place, as this is one of the fundamental steps in ensuring the success of the WBT model.

**General Recommendations for YBI and Paniamor to Strengthen Project Outcomes:**

3. **Start the transfer process at the beginning of the demonstration experience:** YPCR should engage local governments in the transfer process early in the project timeline. The early start in collaboration with municipalities on the transfer process should include the development of a cost analysis to demonstrate the feasibility of integrating the quality WBT model within local government budgets. It should also include the ongoing provision of technical assistance in model implementation by project staff. This would create a gradual learning process by municipalities that would foment their greater participation and commitment.

4. **Strengthen public policy strategies at the national and local levels:** YPCR should develop a strategic public policy plan to address the employment, education, and training needs of youth in vulnerable conditions, and their psycho-social needs. The project advisory committee of local government, business, worker, and civil society organizations should engage in discussion and dialogue to identify strategies and should lobby for developing policies supporting the scaling-up of quality WBT initiatives and their inclusion in Dual Education.

5. **Form a multidisciplinary project team to execute the quality WBT model**: As the model is scaled up, YBI and PF should continue to recommend the inclusion of staff trained in psychology and social work to address psycho-social factors that could support or impede successful outcomes for each young participant.

6. **Allocate resources to childcare services**: YBI and Paniamor should allocate funds to childcare services to facilitate and enable the participation of young mothers in the quality WBT program, as young mothers are among the most likely to be neither working nor studying with few opportunities to break this cycle.

**Recommendation for USDOL to strengthen the long-term sustainability:**

7. **Provide continued support for specific award modification activities**: USDOL should extend the YPCR project by at least one year with additional funding to enable the proper transfer and implementation of the quality WBT model in other municipal youth employment training programs. Considering the progress lost during the final six months of the project and the potential impact of strengthening the transfer process of the quality WBT model to municipal employment training programs, USDOL, YBI, and PF should begin discussions regarding an additional Award Modification.

# Annex A: Evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR)

**Background and Justification**

The Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) is an office within the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL). ILAB's mission is to promote a fair global playing field for workers in the United States and around the world by enforcing trade commitments, strengthening labor standards, and combating international child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking.

OCFT works to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking around the world through international research, policy engagement, technical cooperation, and awareness-raising. Since OCFT's technical cooperation program began in 1995, the U.S. Congress has appropriated funds annually to USDOL for efforts to combat exploitive child labor internationally. This funding has been used to support technical cooperation projects in more than 90 countries around the world. Technical cooperation projects funded by USDOL support sustained efforts that address child labor and forced labor's underlying causes, including poverty and lack of access to education.

This evaluation approach will be under DOL's Evaluation Policy[14.] OCFT is committed to using the most rigorous methods applicable for this qualitative performance evaluation and to learning from the evaluation results. The evaluation will be conducted by an independent third party and in an ethical manner and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and privacy of participants. The quality standards underlying this evaluation are: Relevance, Coherence (to the extent possible), Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact (to the extent possible), and Sustainability.[15] In conducting this evaluation, the evaluator will strive to uphold the American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators.[16] OCFT will make the evaluation report available and accessible on its website.

**Project Context**

The Youth Pathways to Leadership, Learning and Livelihoods project in Costa Rica (YPCR) project improved the country capacity to implement quality workplace-based training (WBT) alternatives for vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market. In 2016, the project's first year of implementation, Costa Rica had a national unemployment rate of 9.6% and a 16.6% unemployment rate for youth ages 15 to 24. In addition, the country had 147,959 youth that neither studied nor worked (NiNis, in Spanish)

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[14]For more information on DOL's Evaluation Policy, please visit https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/evaluationpolicy.htm

[15] From Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use by the Organization for Economic Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Network on Development Evaluation. DOL determined these criteria are in accordance with the OMB Guidance M-20-12. For more information, please visit: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf

[16] For more information on the American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles, please visit: https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51

representing 17% of the total youth population.[17] As described in the YPCR technical proposal, female NiNis represent two thirds of this group, with early marriage and teenage pregnancy being two of the main contributing factors. The NiNis are vulnerable to exploitation as they face a scarcity of resources and limited access to quality jobs. Unemployed youth without qualifications turn to the informal sector for livelihoods where they find fewer protections and work under harmful and exploitative conditions. Factors contributing to the difficulty of accessing quality employment for those seeking to enter the workforce include insufficient education, lack of experience and a gap between the trainings offered and the skill sets needed by the private sector in the rapidly changing Costa Rican labor market.

**Impact of COVID-19 on National Unemployment Rate:** As a result of the current health crisis the national unemployment rate rose to a high of 24% in August 2020 and youth unemployment skyrocketed to 48%. The rate of youth who were neither studying nor working increased to 22%.18

**Project-Specific Information**

In September 2016, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) awarded YouthBuild International (YBI) and local implementing partner Paniamor Foundation (PF) a four-year $3,000,000 Cooperative Agreement grant to implement the Youth Pathways to Leadership, Learning and Livelihoods project in Costa Rica (YPCR). This was an x-year project with a termination date of xyz. On September 14, 2020, USDOL approved a costed extension to address emerging issues stemming from the coronavirus pandemic. This extended the period of performance by 8 months, revising the project with an end date of May 30, 2021 and a budget increase of $250,000 to sustain the successful completion of objectives and expand the project's response to COVID-19.

The YPCR project aims to improve the country capacity to implement quality workplace-based training (WBT) alternatives for vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market by: 1) promoting the improvement of laws and policies supporting WBT, 2) engaging employer and worker organizations to implement WBT, and 3) facilitating the improvement of public and private programs to outreach to vulnerable youth to access WBT. A demonstrative initiative was implemented in Limón as a pilot in developing WBT opportunities for at-risk youth aged 15 to 21. This model included the active participation of vulnerable youth and their respective families, the private sector, and public institutions with related mandates.

The costed extension granted to the YPCR project due to the coronavirus health is to enable a response to the immediate need for families to generate income. During the extension period, YPCR will continue to provide youth with access to the internet, facilitating the provision of communications regarding food basket distribution, virtual self-employment training, and socially-distanced psycho-emotional support. YPCR will adapt its WBT model to include self-employment ventures that can sustain youth and their families until the Costa Rican economy and formal job market are on the upswing. In addition, the YPCR project will continue offering training in leadership, local advocacy, and the prevention of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

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[17] Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC), *Encuesta Continua de* Empleo, 2016. https://www.inec.cr/encuestas/encuesta-continua-de-empleo

18 Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC), *Encuesta Continua de Empleo*, 2020. https://www.inec.cr/encuestas/encuesta-continua-de-empleo

The original project design included 3 long-term outcomes (OTC), 7 medium-term outcomes (MTO) and 12 outputs. The project added four new MTOs as part of Project Modification No. 4 (14 September 2020).

The project design included 3 long-term outcomes (OTC), 7 medium-term outcomes (MTO) and 12 outputs. The project design also included 26 indicators to measure project achievements. As a result of Project Modification No. 4 (September 14, 2020), four new MTOs were added to cover the project's expansion to respond to COVID-19. Table 1 presents the YPCR Results Framework, which includes the long-term outcomes and all medium-term outcomes and their corresponding outputs.

presents the updated YPCR Results Framework with the project's long-term and medium-term outcomes and corresponding outputs.

**Table 12: YPCR Results Framework (September 2020)**

| **Project Goal:** To improve the country-capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives addressing vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market | |
|---|---|
| **Long-term Outcomes (OTC)** | **Medium-term Outcomes (MTO) and Related Outputs** |
| **OTC 1**: Laws and/or policies supporting quality WBT initiatives for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth, are improved and/or implemented by key stakeholders. | **MTO 1.1** Key stakeholders advised by the project, formally agree on public policy proposals enhancing the implementation of quality WBT alternatives for vulnerable youth.<br>**Output 1.1.1** A quality WBT related communication strategy designed and launched<br>**MTO 1.2** Key legislative commissions reference WBT related evidence-based information provided by the project.<br>**Output 1.2.1** Leaders and authorities with mandates related to youth employment policies and or programs, educated on WBT value.<br>***MTO 1.3** DNE-MTSS will approve and implement a workplan ensuring the smooth implementation of the WBT policy roadmap developed by YPCR. |
| **OTC 2** Employers, workers' organizations and other stakeholders, implement good practices related to WBT for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth. | **MTO 2.1** Attitudes about quality WBT for vulnerable youth amongst key stakeholders and society, have been improved.<br>**Output 2.1.1** Key stakeholders have been trained on implementing WBT.<br>**Output 2.1.2** Vulnerable youth and their families informed about quality WBT opportunities<br>**MTO 2.2** Knowledge about good practices related to WBT for youth, including vulnerable and marginalized youth, is enhanced.<br>**Output 2.2.1** One demonstrative quality WBT initiative addressing vulnerable youth, including adolescents in context of conflict with the law and young parents up to age of 21, carried out.<br>**MTO 2.3** Companies and stakeholders trained on good practices, create and /or pilot quality WBT, including vulnerable youth.<br>**Output 2.3.1** A Knowledge Bank of domestic and international good practices focused on WBT has been designed and developed.<br>**Output 2.3.2** A National Employment System capacity building strategy for the design and implementation of quality WBT, delivered.<br>***MTO 2.4** Vulnerable youth receive psycho-social support resulting from mental health needs that have emerged because of COVID-19 and are prepared to promote mental health strategies virtually and in-person.<br>***MTO 2.5** Food basket distribution will reduce vulnerable youth engaging in unsafe and hazardous working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. |

| **Project Goal:** To improve the country-capacity to implement quality WBT alternatives addressing vulnerable youth excluded from the labor market | |
|---|---|
| **Long-term Outcomes (OTC)** | **Medium-term Outcomes (MTO) and Related Outputs** |
| **OTC 3** The quality of existing public and private programs that provide vulnerable and marginalized youth with necessary skills to enter WBT programs, is improved. | **MTO 3.1** Coordination between service providers reaching vulnerable and marginalized youth and workplace-based training programs is strengthened.<br>**Output 3.1.1** Mapping and assessment of key contributing factors for a WBT strategy is developed<br>**Output 3.1.2** A Blueprint for a national WBT strategy has been created<br>**Output 3.1.3** Inter-institutional agreements for coordination at the local level have been defined.<br>**MTO 3.2** Relevance of skills training programs available to vulnerable and marginalized youth is improved.<br>**Output 3.2.1** MTSS, INA and/or MEP, and private sector partners integrate quality WBT skills as a component of their training programs.<br>**MTO 3.3** Training of institutional staff in charge of the provision of services for vulnerable youth, has been institutionalized.<br>**Output 3.3.1** A training program for key staff of Empléate, INA and/or MEP, developed and delivered to authorities.<br>***MTO 3.4** Self-employment and entrepreneurship readiness will strengthen participating youth's resilience to mitigate the negative socio-economic impact resulting from COVID-19. |

*Source: YPCR CMEP, October 2017* and *Grant Modification No. 4, September 14, 2020*

**Four MTOs were added as part of Modification No. 4*

**Purpose and Scope of Evaluation**

The purpose of final performance evaluation covered under this contract includes, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Assessing if the project has achieved its objectives and outcomes, identifying the challenges encountered in doing so, and analyzing the driving factors for these challenges;
- Assessing the intended and unintended effects of the project;
- Assessing lessons learned and emerging practices from the project (e.g., strategies and models of intervention) and experiences in implementation that can be applied in current or future projects in the focus country(ies) and in projects designed under similar conditions or target sectors; and
- Assessing which outcomes or outputs can be deemed sustainable.

**Intended Users**

The evaluation will provide OCFT, the grantee, other project stakeholders, and stakeholders working to combat child labor more broadly, an assessment of the project's performance, its effects on project participants, and an understanding of the factors driving the project results. The evaluation results, conclusions and recommendations will inform any project adjustments that may need to be made, and to inform stakeholders in the design and implementation of subsequent phases or future child labor elimination projects. The evaluation report will be published on the USDOL website, so the report should be written as a standalone document, providing the background information for readers unfamiliar with the details of the

project.

**Evaluation Questions**

The YPCR final evaluation questions focus on three areas: project design, effectiveness, and sustainability, and good practices and lessons learned.

**Project Design**

1. To what extent was the project's theory of change valid and coherent given the implementing environment?

   a. Were the project strategies relevant to the specific needs of project participants, communities, and other stakeholders?

**Effectiveness**

2. To what extent has the project achieved its primary objectives and planned outcomes at the time of the evaluation and is the project likely to achieve them by the end of the project? Specifically,

   a. To what extent have the activities in Limón contributed to the public policies and programs the project is promoting at the national/regional level? How?

3. To what extent were the recommendations from the midterm evaluation implemented and what were the results?

4. Did the project cause unintended results on its target communities and participants? If so, what were they?

5. How have the monitoring and evaluation systems (CMEP, pre-situational analysis, etc.) been implemented and are they being used to identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies, and make informed decisions?

   a) How effective is the project's monitoring of direct beneficiaries (youth in Limón)?

6. What were the key internal or external factors that limited or facilitated the achievement of project outcomes? Specifically:

   a) To what extent was the YPCR project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

   b) How did the YPCR project pivot strategies due to the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the results?

**Sustainability**

7. Which project activities/initiatives are most likely sustainable and transferable to key stakeholders (at the community, municipality, departmental and national levels) before the project ends? What factors contributed to this sustainability?

8. How could the project have improved its sustainability efforts?

**Good Practices/Lessons Learned**

9. What are promising practices and lessons learned that could benefit similar projects or future programming in Costa Rica?

**Evaluation Methodology and Timeframe**
The evaluation methodology will consist of the following activities and approaches:

**A. Approach**

The evaluation approach will be qualitative and participatory and use project documents including CMEP data to provide quantitative information. Qualitative information will be obtained through virtual interviews and focus groups. Opinions coming from stakeholders and project participants will improve and clarify the use of quantitative analysis. The participatory nature of the evaluation will contribute to the sense of ownership among stakeholders and project participants.

If it is available, quantitative data will be drawn from the CMEP and project reports and incorporated in the analysis. Project monitoring data shall be triangulated with relevant quantitative or qualitative data collected during fieldwork, to objectively rate the level of achievement of each of the project's major outcomes on a four-point scale (low, moderate, above-moderate, and high).

The evaluation approach will be independent in terms of the membership of the evaluation team. Project staff and implementing partners will generally be present only in meetings with stakeholders, communities, and beneficiaries to provide introductions. The following additional principles will be applied during the evaluation process:

1. Methods of data collection and stakeholder perspectives will be triangulated for many of the evaluation questions.
2. Efforts will be made to include parents' and children's voices and beneficiary participation generally, using child-sensitive approaches to interviewing children following the ILO-IPEC guidelines on research with children on the worst forms of child labor (http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=3026) and UNICEF Principles for Ethical Reporting on Children (http://www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html).
3. Gender and cultural sensitivity will be integrated in the evaluation approach.
4. Consultations will incorporate flexibility to maintain a sense of ownership of the stakeholders and beneficiaries, allowing additional questions to be posed that are not included in the TOR, whilst ensuring that key information requirements are met.
5. As far as possible, a consistent approach will be followed in each virtual interview, with adjustments made for the different actors, activities conducted, and the progress of implementation in each locality.

**B. Evaluator**
The evaluation team will consist of one lead evaluator, with support from the MSI technical team. One member of the project staff may initiate the virtual interviews to make introductions. This person is not involved in the evaluation process, or interviews.

The lead evaluator will develop the methodology in consultation with MSI, USDOL, and the YPCR project staff; directly conducting interviews and facilitating other data collection processes; analysis of the evaluation material gathered; presenting feedback on the initial results of the evaluation to national stakeholders and preparing the evaluation report.

## C. Data Collection Methodology

1. Document Review
   - Pre-field visit preparation includes extensive review of documents
   - During fieldwork, documentation will be verified, and additional documents may be collected
   - The evaluator shall also review the Routine Data Quality Assessment (RDQA) form completed by the grantee. The evaluator shall assess whether findings from the RDQA were used by the project to formulate and implement measures to strengthen their data management and reporting system and improve data quality. The evaluator's analysis should be included in the evaluation report.
   - The evaluator shall also review key CMEP outcome and OCFT Standard Output indicators with the grantee. This will include reviewing the indicator definitions in the CMEP's Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and the reported values in the Technical Progress Report (TPR) Annex A to ensure the reporting is accurate and complete.
   - Documents may include:
     - CMEP documents and data reported in Annex A of the TPR,
     - Routine Data Quality Assessment (RDQA) form as appropriate
     - Baseline and endline survey reports or pre-situational analyses,
     - Project document and revisions,
     - Project budget and revisions,
     - Cooperative Agreement and project modifications,
     - Technical Progress and Status Reports,
     - Project Results Frameworks and Monitoring Plans,
     - Work plans,
     - Correspondence related to Technical Progress Reports,
     - Management Procedures and Guidelines,
     - Research or other reports undertaken (KAP studies, etc.), and,
     - Project files (including school records).

2. Question Matrix

Before beginning fieldwork, the evaluator will create a question matrix, which outlines the source of data from where the evaluator plans to collect information for each TOR question. This will help the evaluator decide as to how they will allocate their time in the field. It will also help the evaluator to ensure that they are exploring all possible avenues for data triangulation and to clearly note where their evaluation results are coming from. The Contractor will share the question matrix with USDOL.

3. Interviews with stakeholders

Online interviews will be held with many project stakeholders. The evaluator will solicit the opinions of, but not limited to: children, youth, community members in areas where awareness-raising activities occurred, parents of project participants, teachers, government representatives, employers and private-sector actors, legal authorities, union and NGO officials, the action program implementers, and program staff regarding the project's accomplishments, program design, sustainability, and the working relationship between project staff and their partners, where appropriate.

The COVID-19 pandemic restricts the evaluator to conduct all stakeholder interviews and focus groups through virtual platforms. These meetings will be one-on-one or group interviews. Technically, stakeholders are all those who have an interest in a project, such as implementers, partners, direct and indirect

participants, community leaders, donors, and government officials.
The project design included 3 long-term outcomes (OTC), 7 medium-term outcomes (MTO) and 12 outputs. The project design also included 26 indicators to measure project achievements. As a result of Project Modification No. 4 (September 14, 2020), four new MTOs were added to cover the project's expansion to respond to COVID-19. Table 1 presents the YPCR Results Framework, which includes the long-term outcomes and all medium-term outcomes and their corresponding outputs.

describes the YPCR project stakeholder groups expected to participate in the final evaluation.

**Table 2: Stakeholders Expected to Participate in YPCR Project Final Evaluation – November 2020**

| Stakeholder Group | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| YouthBuild International | International support staff from YBI |
| YPCR project team | YPCR project staff from Paniamor |
| YPCR project consultants | Researchers producing thematic reports |
| Direct beneficiaries | Youth participating in YPCR project activities in Limón |
| Parents of direct beneficiaries | Parents residing in Limón and Siquirres |
| Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MTSS) | National Employment Office (DNE); Office for Child Labor Eradication and Protection of Adolescent Workers (OATIA); Social Security Office |
| Other Government of Costa Rica Ministries | Ministry of the Presidency |
| Government of Costa Rica Independent Programs and Institutes | State of the Nation Program; National Learning Institute (INA); National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) |
| Municipal authorities | Municipal officials from Limón and Siquirres |
| Business associations | Caribbean Women's Business Chamber (CEMCA); Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Limón (CCITULCR); Costa Rican Union of Chambers and Associations of the Private Business Sector (UCCAEP) |
| Employers participating in the WBT program | Only if these are not represented above |
| Labor unions | National Federation of Agroindustry Workers and Related Industries (FENTRAGH) |
| Universities | University College of Limón (CUNLIMON) |
| Civil Society Organizations and Networks | Global Apprenticeship Network |
| International Organizations | International Labor Organization |
| US Government | USDOL and US Embassy in Costa Rica |

4. Field Visits

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no field site visits. All evaluation interviews will rely on online methods (online surveys, telephone or virtual interviews). The final selection of interviewees will partially depend on connectivity via a virtual platform or by phone. Every effort will be made to include a representative sample of project beneficiaries from each of the four project cohorts and representatives from local governments, WBT host companies, civil society organizations, community leaders and parents.

## D. Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

The evaluation mission will observe utmost confidentiality related to sensitive information and feedback elicited during the individual and group interviews. To mitigate bias during the data collection process and ensure a maximum freedom of expression of the implementing partners, stakeholders, communities, and project participants, implementing partner staff will generally not be present during interviews. However, implementing partner staff may virtually introduce to facilitate the evaluation process, make respondents feel comfortable, and to allow the evaluator to observe the interaction between the implementing partner staff and the interviewees.

## E. Stakeholder Meeting

Following the field visits, a virtual stakeholder meeting will be organized by the project and led by the evaluator to bring together project staff from YBI and PF, and other interested parties to discuss the evaluation findings. The list of participants to be invited will be drafted before the evaluator's visit and confirmed in consultation with project staff during fieldwork. ILAB staff may participate in the stakeholder meeting virtually.

The meeting will present the major preliminary results and emerging issues, solicit recommendations, discuss project sustainability and obtain clarification or additional information from stakeholders, including those not interviewed earlier. The agenda of the meeting will be determined by the evaluator in consultation with project staff. Some specific questions for stakeholders may be prepared to guide the discussion and possibly a brief written feedback form.

The agenda is expected to include some of these items:

1. Presentation by the evaluator of the preliminary main results
2. Feedback and questions from stakeholders on the results
3. Opportunity for implementing partners not met to present their views on progress and challenges in their locality
4. If appropriate, Possible Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) exercise on the project's performance
5. Discussion of recommendations to improve the implementation and ensure sustainability. Consideration will be given to the value of distributing a feedback form for participants to nominate their "action priorities" for the remainder of the project.

A debrief call will be held with the evaluator and USDOL after the stakeholder workshop to provide USDOL with preliminary results and solicit feedback as needed.

## F. Limitations

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no field site visits. All evaluation interviews will rely on online methods (online surveys, telephone or virtual interviews). The final selection of interviewees partially depends on connectivity via a virtual platform or by phone. Every effort will be made to include a representative sample of project beneficiaries from each of the four project cohorts and representatives from local governments, WBT host companies, civil society organizations, community leaders and parents. The human element in data collection techniques cannot be underestimated.

This is not a formal impact assessment. Results for the evaluation will be based on information collected from background documents and in interviews with stakeholders, project staff, and project participants. The accuracy of the evaluation results will be determined by the integrity of information provided to the evaluator from these sources.

In addition, the ability of the evaluator to determine efficiency will be limited by financial data available. A cost-efficiency analysis is not included because it would require impact data which is not available.

## G. Roles and Responsibilities

**The Contractor is responsible for accomplishing the following items:**

- Providing all evaluation management and logistical support for evaluation deliverables within the timelines specified in the contract and TOR;
- Providing all logistical support for travel associated with the evaluation;
- Providing quality control over all deliverables submitted to ILAB;
- Ensuring the evaluator conducts the evaluation according to the TOR;

**The evaluator will conduct the evaluation according to the TOR. The evaluator is responsible for accomplishing the following items:**

- Receiving and responding to or incorporating input from the grantees and ILAB on the initial TOR draft;
- Finalizing and submitting the TOR and sharing concurrently with the grantees and ILAB;
- Reviewing project background documents;
- Reviewing the evaluation questions and refining them as necessary;
- Developing and implementing an evaluation methodology, including document review, KIIs and FGDs, and secondary data analysis, to answer the evaluation questions;
- Conducting planning meetings or calls, including developing a field itinerary with ILAB and grantees;
- Deciding the composition of field visit KII and FGD participants to ensure the objectivity of the evaluation;
- Developing an evaluation question matrix for ILAB;
- Presenting preliminary findings verbally to project field staff and other stakeholders as determined in consultation with ILAB and grantees;
- Preparing an initial draft of the evaluation report for ILAB and grantee review;
- Incorporating comments from ILAB and the grantee/other stakeholders into the final report.
- Developing a comment matrix addressing the disposition of the comments provided;
- Preparing and submitting the final report;

**ILAB is responsible for the following items:**

- Launching the contract;
- Reviewing the TOR, providing input to the evaluation team as necessary, and agreeing on final draft;
- Providing project background documents to the evaluation team, in collaboration with the grantees;
- Obtaining country clearance from U.S. Embassy in fieldwork country;

- Briefing grantees on the upcoming field visit and working with them to coordinate and prepare for the visit;
- Reviewing and providing comments on the draft evaluation report;
- Approving the final draft of the evaluation report;
- Participating in the pre- and post-trip debriefing and interviews;
- Including the ILAB evaluation contracting officer's representative on all communication with the evaluation team;

**The grantee is responsible for the following items:**

- Reviewing the TOR, providing input to the evaluation team as necessary, and agreeing on the final draft;
- Providing project background materials to the evaluation team, in collaboration with ILAB;
- Listing recommended interviewees with feedback on the draft TOR;
- Participating in planning meetings or calls, including developing a field itinerary with ILAB and evaluator;
- Scheduling meetings during the field visit and coordinating all logistical arrangements;
- Helping the evaluation team to identify and arrange for interpreters as needed to facilitate worker interviews;
- Reviewing and providing comments on the draft evaluation reports;
- Organizing, financing, and participating in the stakeholder debriefing meeting;
- Providing in-country ground and air transportation to meetings and interviews;
- Including the ILAB program office on all written communication with the evaluation team.

**H. Timetable**

The tentative timetable is as follows. Actual dates may be adjusted as needs arise.

| Task | Date |
|---|---|
| Evaluation launch call | 10/15/2020 |
| TOR Template submitted to Contractor | 10/15/2020 |
| Background project documents sent to Contractor | 10/20/2020 |
| Logistics call - Discuss logistics and field itinerary | 10/23/2020 |
| Contractor and Grantee work to develop draft itinerary and stakeholder list | 10/27/2020 |
| Draft TOR sent to DOL/OCFT and Grantee | 11/4/2020 |
| DOL/OCFT and Grantee provide comments on draft TOR | 11/5/2020 |
| Finalize field itinerary and stakeholder list for workshop | 11/5/2020 |
| Final TOR submitted to DOL/OCFT for approval | 11/5/2020 |
| Question matrix submitted to DOL/OCFT for review | 11/5/2020 |
| Final approval of TOR by DOL/OCFT | 11/6/2020 |

| Task | Date |
|---|---|
| Submit finalized TOR to Grantee | 11/6/2020 |
| Interview call with DOL/OCFT | 11/6/2020 |
| Interview call with Grantee HQ staff | 11/6/2020 |
| Fieldwork | 11/9/2020 – 11/20/2020 |
| Stakeholder Workshop | 11/20/2020 |
| Post-fieldwork debrief call | 11/23/2020 |
| Draft report (2-week review draft) submitted to DOL/OCFT and Grantee | 12/18/2020 |
| DOL/OCFT and Grantee/key stakeholder comments due to contractor after full 2-week review | 12/28/2020 |
| Final report submitted to DOL/OCFT and Grantee | 1/5/2021 |
| Final approval of report by DOL/OCFT | 1/8/2021 |
| Editing and 508 compliance by contractor | 1/8/2021 – 1/13/2021 |
| Final edited report submitted to COR | 1/14/2021 |
| Draft infographic document submitted to DOL/OCFT | 1/22/2021 |
| DOL/OCFT comments on draft infographic | 1/29/2021 |
| Final infographic submitted to DOL/OCFT | 2/5/2021 |
| Final approval of infographic by DOL/OCFT | 2/10/2021 |
| Final edited approved report and infographic shared with grantee | 2/11/2021 |

**Expected Outputs/Deliverables**

Ten working days following the evaluator's return from fieldwork, a first draft evaluation report will be submitted to the Contractor. The report should have the following structure and content:

I. Table of Contents

II. List of Acronyms

III. Executive Summary (no more than **five pages** summarizing the evaluation, summary of main results/lessons learned/emerging good practices, and key recommendations)

IV. Evaluation Objectives

V. Project Description

VI. Listing of Evaluation Questions

VII. Results

A. The results section includes the facts, analysis, and supporting evidence. The results section of the evaluation report should address the evaluation questions. It need not be in a question-response format but should respond to each evaluation question.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions – interpretation of the facts, including criteria for judgments

B. Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices[19]

C. Key Recommendations - critical for successfully meeting project objectives and/or judgments on what changes need to be made for sustainability or future programming

IX. Annexes - including list of documents reviewed; interviews/meetings/site visits; stakeholder workshop agenda and participants; TOR; Evaluation Methodology and Limitations; Table of Recommendations (citing page numbers for evidence, implementing party) etc.

The key recommendations must be action-oriented and implementable. The recommendations should be clearly linked to results and directed to a specific party to be implemented. It is preferable for the report to contain no more than 10 recommendations, but other suggestions may be incorporated in the report in other ways.

The total length of the report should be approximately 30 pages for the main report, excluding the executive summary and annexes.

The first draft of the report will be circulated to OCFT and the grantee individually for their review. The evaluator will incorporate comments from OCFT and the grantee/other key stakeholders into the final reports and the evaluator will respond, in a comment matrix, as to why any comments might not have been incorporated.

While the substantive content of the results, conclusions, and recommendations of the report shall be determined by the evaluator, the report is subject to final approval by ILAB/OCFT in terms of whether the report meets the conditions of the TOR.

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19 An emerging *good practice* is a process, practice, or system highlighted in the evaluation reports as having improved the performance and efficiency of the program in specific areas. They are activities or systems that are recommended to others for use in similar situations. A *lesson learned* documents the experience gained during a program. They may identify a process, practice, or systems to avoid in specific situations

# Annex B: Master Interview Guide

| TOR Questions | Interview Questions | YPCR Project Team | Direct Beneficiaries | Parents | Nat'l Government Institutions | Municipal Government | Business Groups/ Host Companies | Labor Unions | Universities/ CSOs Intl. Orgs. | US Government |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Design** | **Diseño del Proyecto** | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. To what extent was the project's theory of change valid and coherent given the implementing environment?<br><br>TOC: Improve country capacity to offer quality WBT to vulnerable youth by<br>i. Developing or improving the laws/policies supporting quality WBT opportunities for vulnerable youth<br>ii. Implementing good practices with employer sector and worker organizations related to WBT for vulnerable youth<br>iii. Improving the quality of existing programs that provide training to vulnerable youth to enter WBT programs | 1. La meta del proyecto es mejorar la capacidad del país para ofrecer programas de calidad de formación basadas en el puesto de trabajo (FBPT) a jóvenes en condición de vulnerabilidad. Las estrategias para lograr esta meta estaban divididas en tres componentes: (1) incidencia política para apoyar programas de FBPT de calidad, (2) una experiencia demostrativa y (3) mejorar la calidad de programas de formación existentes para jóvenes en condición de vulnerabilidad<br>• ¿Cómo contribuyó el proyecto para promover cambios en las políticas públicas que apoyan alternativas de FBPT para jóvenes en condición de vulnerabilidad?<br>• ¿Cuáles son las buenas prácticas que usaron con las empresas participantes para implementar un programa de calidad de FBPT para jóvenes?<br>¿Qué logró hacer el proyecto para mejorar la calidad de programas de formación para el trabajo que ya existen en el país? | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 1 a) Were the project strategies relevant to the specific needs of project participants, communities and other stakeholders? | 1 a) Con respeto a programas de formación para el trabajo para los jóvenes en condición de vulnerabilidad, ¿cuáles son las necesidades específicas de los participantes y contrapartes? | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ¿Fueron relevantes/apropiadas las estrategias para reducir estas necesidades? ¿Por qué? | | | | | | | | | |
| **TOR Questions** | **Interview Questions** | **YPCR Project Team** | **Direct Beneficiaries** | **Parents** | **Nat'l Government Institutions** | **Municipal Government** | **Business Groups/ Host Companies** | **Labor Unions** | **Universities/ CSOs Intl. Orgs.** | **US Government** |
| **Effectiveness** | **Eficacia** | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. To what extent has the project achieved its primary objectives and planned outcomes at the time of the evaluation, and is the project likely to achieve them by the end of the project? | 2. Según el TPR de octubre 2020, el proyecto ha logrado o sobrepasado la gran mayoría de las metas y resultados establecidos con la excepción de 7 indicadores que contribuyen a la sostenibilidad.<br>¿Cuál es la probabilidad de lograr las metas pendientes antes de que se termine el proyecto? | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 2 a) To what extent have the activities in Limón contributed to the public policies and programs the project is promoting at the national/regional level? How? | 2 a) ¿Cómo ayudó la experiencia demostrativa en Limón para promover las políticas públicas y programas al nivel nacional/municipal sobre FBPT? | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 3. To what extent were the recommendations from the midterm evaluation implemented and what were the results? | 3. ¿Fueron implementadas todas las recomendaciones de la evaluación de medio término? ¿Cuáles fueron los resultados? | X | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Did the project cause unintended results on target communities and participants? If so, what were they? | 4. ¿Hubo resultados inesperados del proyecto para las comunidades o los participantes? ¿Cuáles? | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. How have the monitoring and evaluation systems (CMEP, pre-situational analysis, etc.) been implemented and are they being used to identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies, and make informed decisions? | 5. ¿Cómo se utilizaron las herramientas del sistema de monitoreo durante la implementación del proyecto (CMEP, diagnóstico preliminar, otros procesos para la recolección de datos)? ¿Ayudaron a identificar tendencias, hacer ajustes, o tomar decisiones informadas? | X | | | | | | | | |
| **TOR Questions** | **Interview Questions** | **YPCR Project Team** | **Direct Beneficiaries** | **Parents** | **Nat'l Government Institutions** | **Municipal Government** | **Business Groups/ Host Companies** | **Labor Unions** | **Universities/ CSOs Intl. Orgs.** | **US Government** |
| **Sustainability** | **Sostenibilidad** | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 a) How effective is the project's monitoring of direct beneficiaries (youth in Limón)? | 5 a) ¿Qué tipo de seguimiento se hizo a los jóvenes durante su participación en el programa? ¿Mantuvieron suficiente comunicación o hay algo que se pudo haber mejorado? | X | X | X | | X | X | | | |
| 6. What were the key internal or external factors that limited or facilitated the achievement of project outcomes? | 6. ¿Cuáles fueron los factores internos o externos que facilitaron o en cambio limitaron los logros de los resultados? | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X |
| 6 a) To what extent was the YPCR project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? | 6 a) ¿Cómo fue afectado el cumplimiento de las actividades y entregables por la pandemia? ¿Cree que todavía hay interés en cumplir con las últimas actividades? | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | |
| 6 b) How did the project pivot strategies due to the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the results? | 6 b) ¿Cuáles ajustes hizo el projecto debido a la pandemia? ¿Cuáles fueron los resultados? | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | |
| 7. Which project activities/initiatives are most likely sustainable and | 7. ¿Cuáles actividades/iniciativas del proyecto esperan que se mantengan y se transfieran al | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| transferable to key stakeholders (at the community, municipal, provincial and national levels) before the project ends?<br>7 a) What factors contributed to this sustainability? | | nivel local o nacional al fin del proyecto?<br>7 a) ¿Cuáles son los factores/razones que contribuyeron a la sostenibilidad? | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. How could the project have improved its sustainability efforts? | | 8. ¿Cómo podría haber mejorado el proyecto las estrategias para promover la sostenibilidad? | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **TOR Questions** | | **Interview Questions** | **YPCR Project Team** | **Direct Beneficiaries** | **Parents** | **Nat'l Government Institutions** | **Municipal Government** | **Business Groups/ Host Companies** | **Labor Unions** | **Universities/ CSOs Intl. Orgs.** | **US Government** |
| **GPs and LL** | | **Buenas prácticas y lecciones aprendidas** | | | | | | | | | |
| 9. What are promising practices and lessons learned that could benefit similar projects or future programming in Costa Rica? | | 9. ¿Cuáles estrategias o actividades deben resaltar como una buena práctica y que podrían beneficiar a otros proyectos similares? ¿Por qué?<br>¿Hay alguna actividad que no se debe repetir en el futuro? ¿Cuál? | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

# Annex C: List of Documents Reviewed

**YPCR Project Documents**

1. IL-29679-16-75-K, Grant Award, Notice of Obligation, Sept. 26, 2016
2. IL-29679-16-75-K, Project Modification No. 1, Dec. 7, 2016
3. IL-29679-16-75-K, Project Modification No. 2, Mar. 24, 2017
4. IL-29679-16-75-K, Project Modification No. 3, Jan. 25, 20179
5. IL-29679-16-75-K, Project Modification No. 4, Sept. 14, 2020
6. YPCR Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Oct. 2017
7. YPCR Midterm Evaluation, March 2019
8. YPCR Systematization Document, October 2020
9. YPCR Model Blueprint and "Toolkit" of corresponding resources
10. Technical Progress Report, October 2017 and Annexes
11. Technical Progress Report, April 2018
12. Technical Progress Report, October 2018 and Annexes
13. Technical Progress Report, April 2019
14. Technical Progress Report, October 2019 and Annexes
15. Technical Progress Report, April 2020
16. Technical Progress Report, October 2020 and Annexes

**YPCR Project Studies**

17. Psicosociales S.A. "Conocimientos, actitudes y prácticas hacia los servicios municipales para la población adolescente y joven del cantón central de Limón en el ámbito del empleo, formación para el empleo y asistencia social," April 2019
18. Lentini Gilli, Valeria, "Informe descriptivo de la oferta de capacitación en los cantones central de Limón y Siquirres." Dec. 2019
19. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INEC). "Encuesta Nacional de Puestos de Trabajo en Establecimientos. Resultados para Comercio, cantón central de Limón y distrito central de Siquirres." Dec. 2019

**Additional Reference Documents**

20. USDOL, Disposition of Evaluation Recommendation Tracker (DERT) for YPCR
21. USDOL, Management Procedures and Guidelines for Cooperative Agreements, FY 2017 and FY 2019
22. Ley 9728, "Educación y Formación Técnica Dual," Legislative Assembly, 12 September 2019. http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=89820&nValor3=118020&strTipM=TC
23. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC), *Encuesta Continua de Empleo*, 2016-2020. https://www.inec.cr/encuestas/encuesta-continua-de-empleo